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R. Mark Bean

COOPERATIVE SECURITY  
IN NORTHEAST ASIA

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# COOPERATIVE SECURITY IN NORTHEAST ASIA

A China–Japan–South Korea  
Coalition Approach

R. Mark Bean



1990  
National Defense University  
Washington, DC

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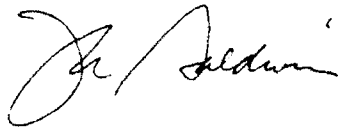
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## FOREWORD

The economic and national security of Asia is far more important to the United States today than it was two decades ago. The economic growth of Japan and South Korea makes these nations strong competitors with the United States in world markets, as well as targets of Soviet efforts toward increased commerce, wider influence, and better relations. China lags Japan and Korea in development, but continues to modernize; its vast potential cannot be overlooked. Even conceding that NATO has achieved "victory" in the Cold War in Europe, these countries—China, Japan, and South Korea—could become a new and different front line in competition between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Relations among those three countries, as well as Soviet and American interests in Northeast Asia, provide the basic material for this study by Colonel R. Mark Bean, US Air Force. Bean traces the historical relations through to the present. Acknowledging long-term animosities, he also points out cultural links between Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. He finds historical bases for the current economic and security interdependence of the three nations. Along with the cultural ties, these mutual interests could serve as the underpinning of a cooperative regime of regional security.

American policymakers should note Bean's caution against trying to impose a formal, NATO-like alliance where the necessary degree of shared values and outlook does not exist. Readers will benefit from this reasoned, balanced examination of relationships in a region whose future is increasingly important to our own security.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. A. Baldwin', with a stylized, flowing script.

**J. A. Baldwin**  
Vice Admiral, US Navy  
President, National Defense University



## PREFACE

As I began work on this research project, my goal was to avoid immediate events as much as possible and focus on long-term trends that would be of great significance to the United States in its future security relations with Japan, China, and Korea. Doing so proved more difficult than I had imagined. Unprecedented events unfolding while I worked, such as student demonstrations and resultant political backlash in China and the rapid movement toward popular democracy in Korea, were impossible to ignore. But, while incorporating these events as much as possible, I have tried to make judgments based on their significance over the longer term.

Though the definitive judgment of history has yet to be rendered, events occurring since I originally completed my manuscript—for example, China's Thirteenth Party Congress and its reaffirmation of economic and political reform, and South Korea's holding of direct presidential elections—seem to indicate I was at least moderately successful. Moreover, in its January 1988 report, *Discriminate Deterrence*, President Reagan's bipartisan Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy predicted that by 2010 China and Japan will each have the economic capacity to act as major world powers, while South Korea's economy is likely to grow substantially relative to those of West European countries. China, the report estimates, may well come to

have the world's second- or third-largest economy and become a full-fledged superpower in military terms.<sup>1</sup>

Another area of significant change, of course, has been the continuation—and acceleration—of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union, as well as the historic steps toward accommodation between the United States and the Soviet Union that those reforms have made possible. These events have importantly affected the Soviet Union's relations with its Northeast Asian neighbors, most notably in the agreement to remove SS-20 nuclear missiles from Asia as part of the INF Treaty, the decision to withdraw forces from Afghanistan, and new flexibility shown on Sino-Soviet border disagreements and support for Vietnam in Cambodia.

On the negative side, as pointed out by Richard Armitage, the Soviets have since 1985 increased their Far East military forces from 53 divisions to 57 divisions, added 40 vessels to their Pacific Fleet, and increased military support to North Korea, adding SA-5 surface-to-air missiles, Su-25 ground-attack aircraft, and MiG-29 interceptors to the MiG-23s discussed later in this book.<sup>2</sup> Former Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci remained equally wary of Soviet intentions after a visit with his counterpart in the Soviet Union. Carlucci told Soviet officers that, despite recent Soviet emphasis on defensive doctrine and claims of diminished military spending, US analysts see the Soviet military budget as increasing and

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<sup>1</sup>Fred C. Ikle and Albert Wohlstetter (co-chairmen), *Discriminate Deterrence*, Report of the Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy (Washington: Government Printing Office, January 1988), pp. 6–7.

<sup>2</sup>Fai Ming Cheung, "The doctrine of minimal defence unfolds slowly," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 August 1988, p. 28.

have "difficulty reconciling a defensive doctrine with what [the United States] sees in Soviet force structure and operational strategy as an emphasis on the offensive."<sup>1</sup>

Though these developments bring into somewhat clearer focus Soviet *methodology* in dealing with the challenge posed by its dynamic Northeast Asian neighbors and the United States, they still leave unanswered the question that occupies much of what follows—that of long-term Soviet *motives*. Thus, this book's final judgment, that the United States and the Soviet Union are engaged in what Zbigniew Brzezinski calls a long-term imperial struggle for global domination and that Northeast Asia, as the dynamic hub of Asian-Pacific development, is destined to play a major role, remains *unchanged*.

I am indebted to many people who assisted me on this project. First and foremost were Dr. Fred Kiley, director of the NDU Research Directorate, Dr. Joseph Goldberg, the directorate's able and insightful professor of research, Tom Gill, my editor, and the rest of the directorate staff. Dr. John Endicott, director of NDU's Institute for National Strategic Studies, also provided invaluable encouragement and advice. At the National War College, Asian specialists Dr. Paul Godwin and Lieutenant Colonel Bill Berry greatly enhanced my knowledge of the subject area and provided direction in key areas. Members of the Defense Attache Corps in Beijing, Tokyo, and Seoul were also extremely helpful, both through their knowledge and insight and through their arranging meetings with US embassy personnel and foreign university and research institute scholars. Particularly helpful were

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<sup>1</sup>David Remnick, "Carlucci Accuses Soviets of Offensive Strategy," *Washington Post*, 31 July 1988, p. A12.

Colonel Al Wilhelm, US Army, in Beijing, Colonel Dick Bowers, US Air Force, in Tokyo, and Lieutenant Colonel Ted Moschman, US Air Force, in Seoul. Discussions at Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii with Northeast Asia plans officers, including Lieutenant Colonels "Butch" Wilson, US Marine Corps, Perry Cabor, US Army, and Tom Roarke, US Army, contributed additional enlightenment. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of two groups at NDU: the other NDU senior fellows, who provided a great deal of necessary advice, criticism, and encouragement, and fellow members of Committee Nine of the 1987 National War College class, who enabled me to keep things in proper perspective throughout the year.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the support my wife, Jenny, and sons, Douglas, Brian, and Mark, have provided during this effort. Given the family disruptions resulting from the combined effects of a year of study at the War College and the work on this manuscript, their forbearance and patience were absolutely essential. Perhaps most important, their constant encouragement provided the confidence I needed to finish.

COOPERATIVE SECURITY  
IN NORTHEAST ASIA

# One

## THE CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

*East Asian societies are on the move,  
seeking to transform their ancient civili-  
zations into modern, industrial societies.  
All are seething with restless energy.  
Their people want to catch up with the  
rest of the world and have the better life.*

—Lee Kuan Yew,  
Singapore Prime Minister

Since the end of World War II, no world region has exceeded East Asia in general, and Northeast Asia in particular, in the magnitude of upheaval, change, and progress experienced by its nation-states and peoples. With the notable exception of fighting two major wars in Korea and Vietnam, however, the United States

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has generally failed to devote commensurate attention to the region, focusing much greater effort on European events and affairs. The view that the most important US global interests were centered in Europe, relegating Asia to secondary strategic importance, grew from historical ties and sentimental, cultural, and intellectual affinity between Americans and Europeans.

In recent years, however, particularly since the beginning of the Reagan administration, the center of gravity for US global interests—strategic, political, economic, and cultural—has begun to shift westward, reflecting what Zbigniew Brzezinski has called the “emerging centrality of Asia in American foreign policy.”<sup>1</sup> The Asian-Pacific region in general has assumed a more prominent position relative to overall US global interests, no longer lagging distantly behind Europe. Indeed, though serious and potentially divisive problems exist, US links with Asia may be more comfortable and less fractious than those with Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The growing economic importance of East Asia to the United States is perhaps the most visible manifestation of the westward shift of US interests. As Gaston Sigur, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, has pointed out, East Asia has become the primary source of US trade, accounting in 1985 for about one-third of total US global trade. Furthermore, from 1981 to 1985, when US trade with the world in general was increasing by 13 percent, trade with East Asia and the Pacific region grew by a much larger 42 percent. Consequently, the United

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States has become the number one market for Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and the Philippines, while seven of its top twenty export markets are in the region. These export markets include all the above nations except the Philippines, plus China and Australia. Modest predictions for the future estimate that the Pacific Basin will account for 50 percent of the world's production by the year 2000, leading to growing interdependence among the economies and societies of the Pacific rim. The United States, of course, is a prominent member of this ascendant grouping of nations; therefore, although traditional ties with Europe will remain strong and essential, the United States will increasingly identify its future growth with the Asian-Pacific region.<sup>3</sup>

The Northeast Asian subregion, encompassing China, Japan, and the Korean Peninsula, has itself become a major focal point for US policy. The area includes the world's second largest free-market economy (Japan), a country whose dynamic growth in recent years has brought it to the verge of crossing the threshold from the developing world into the community of mature industrial economies (South Korea), and a nation of vast potential that is struggling to overcome organizational and ideological deficiencies that have prevented it from fully entering the modern world (China). Furthermore, two other rapidly developing Asian-Pacific entities—Hong Kong and Taiwan—should also be considered when discussing the importance of Northeast Asia. Hong Kong will become part of China in 1997, and the



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governments of both Taiwan and China agree that someday one China will encompass the territory of both. In extolling the future of the Asian-Pacific region as a whole, therefore, Gaston Sigur further asserted that Northeast Asia in particular has shown the way to effective economic development.<sup>1</sup> Northeast Asia is indeed a distinctive and dynamic subregion, brimming with potential and destined to lead the Asian-Pacific region into the 21st century.

Of course, the growing relative importance of Northeast Asia in world affairs, particularly in the geostrategic realm, has not gone unnoticed by the Soviet Union. Whether in response to growing US interest in the region or because of their own changing world view, the Soviets, too, have devoted increased attention and resources—chiefly in the form of an ambitious military buildup—to Northeast Asia. Another significant manifestation of Soviet interest and attention was General Secretary Gorbachev's speech in Vladivostok in the summer of 1986, during which he proclaimed the Soviet Union an "Asian and Pacific nation." Gorbachev resurrected old Soviet initiatives on the Soviet concept of Asian security while attempting to break new ground in relations with both communist and non-communist states in the region. The Soviets, too, have clearly shifted their center of gravity toward Northeast Asia in an attempt to maintain their competitive position with respect to overall global power.<sup>2</sup>

Complicating the strategic rivalry between the superpowers, powerful and complex internal forces within Northeast Asian nations are leading

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to unprecedented social, political, and economic changes, reflecting the national aspirations of the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean peoples. What will be the eventual outcome of these changes? Though most experts would agree that initial directions are positive, the eventual consequences—for the countries themselves, the region in general, US interests, and global strategic relationships—are much less clear.<sup>6</sup> There can be little doubt, however, that the final years of the 20th century will be crucial in firmly establishing the overall direction and permanence of these changes.

The existing security backdrop for this unfolding drama is significantly different from that in Europe. Whereas NATO and the Atlantic partnership, often characterized as one of the most successful alliances in history, have generally flourished since the end of the war, no similar structure exists in Northeast Asia for the protection of growing US interests. Instead, the United States maintains separate alliances with Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), for different reasons and through different manifestations. The United States has established a tentative "strategic relationship" with China, with the long-term nature and level of military cooperation still under exploration and development by both sides. Similarly, the Soviet Union has no Warsaw Pact-type alliance in Northeast Asia, but maintains a single bilateral alliance with North Korea. The cohesiveness of this alliance fluctuates markedly according to the whims of the staunchly independent North Korean leadership.

In the past decade, however, tentative signs suggesting potentially significant changes in

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*THE CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT*

regional security relationships have begun to appear. Political evolution within each country, coupled externally with a common fear of growing Soviet regional military power, has paved the way for an increased number of both official and unofficial political, diplomatic, and economic ties among Japan, China, and the ROK, including the first cooperative military contacts since the end of World War II. Japan and China have exchanged visits of defense ministers and senior military leaders and delegations. With the ROK, Japan has conducted similar exchanges that have led to increased cooperation in the areas of intelligence sharing and the tracking of Soviet aircraft and ships transiting areas of mutual interest such as the Tsushima or Korea Strait that separates the two countries.

Even China and the ROK, though they have no diplomatic relations, have developed a common interest in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula so as not to disrupt internal political and economic development. One pronounced indication of this trend is the increase in unofficial contacts between government officials of the two nations. They have resolved incidents such as the defection of Chinese military and civilian aircraft and ships, and planned for cross-participation in sporting events such as the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics, both in Seoul, and the 1990 Beijing Games.<sup>7</sup> Another indication is the growing unofficial trade relationship between South Korea and China.

On the Soviet side, equally profound changes may be in progress. In its longstanding vacillation

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between Moscow and Beijing, the North Korean leadership appears to have taken a genuine, possibly more enduring tilt toward the Soviets, exchanging previously sacrosanct rights of overflight and port access for substantial military aid, including MiG-23 aircraft and surface-to-air anti-aircraft missiles.<sup>8</sup>

Do events such as these, seen in the light of momentous political, economic, and social changes in progress in Northeast Asia, portend equally fundamental changes in the underlying structure of Northeast Asian security relationships? If so, how far and how rapidly might such changes progress? Given the growing importance of the region to overall US interests, it is critical that we understand and respond to the dynamics of regional change. If we are indeed witnessing the first tentative steps in a long-term process that will radically alter the regional—and perhaps global—security environment, now is the time to begin formulating coherent policies to take full advantage of inherent opportunities and avoid potentially serious pitfalls.

Such a reappraisal of Northeast Asian security relationships must consider the region as a whole, for the national stirrings involved share many common themes. On the other hand, a high potential exists for clashes of major interests as individual nations pursue their goals. And when the interests of the United States and the Soviet Union are added,

Politics, economics, military power, history, and the struggle for alternative futures will all come into play.... It is there [Northeast Asia] that the interests

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of four of the world's major powers [the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States] intersect ... an area dense with armaments and afflicted with memories of recent conflict—a subregion in which there are conflicting territorial claims and divided states competing for advantage.<sup>9</sup>

In today's complex world, particularly when powerful forces such as these are evident, predicting the future is indeed a difficult undertaking. On the other hand, those who advocate maintaining the status quo as the simplest and easiest solution are destined to be left far behind by rapidly unfolding events, victims of the modern cliché that the only constant is change. One need only recall the recent changes in the Philippines and their potentially far-reaching effects on both regional and global US security interests for a dramatic illustration. Clearly, maintaining the status quo in Northeast Asia is not an option for US policy as the 21st century approaches. An attempt must be made to anticipate the course of events and develop far-sighted approaches that will at least maintain if not enhance overall US security.

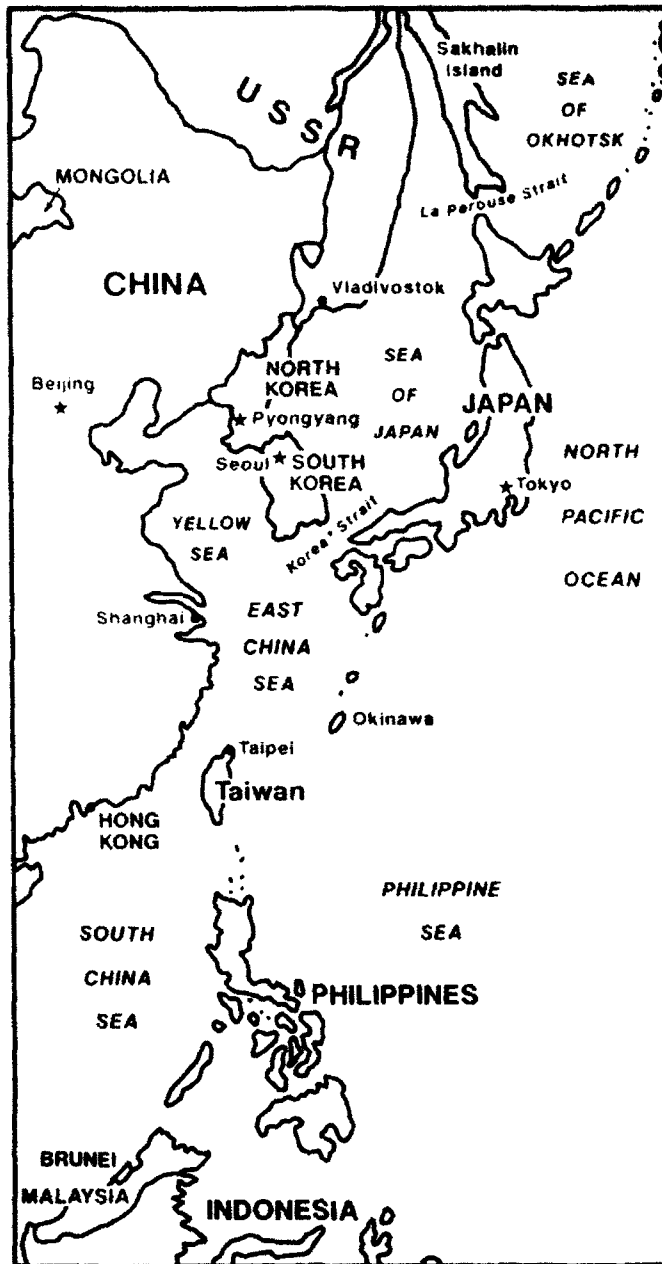
The goal of this study is to illuminate some of the key trends and issues involved, as a modest step in that direction. As a starting point to gain a better overall perspective on the complex security environment of the region, and to illustrate the challenges that future US security policy faces, we will take a brief country-by-country tour of the issues currently dominating the internal and external affairs of the key regional actors—Japan,

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China, the Republic of Korea, the Soviet Union, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

*Japan* possesses a stable political system and the world's second most powerful economy, having achieved full membership in the community of industrialized "Western" democracies. Because of its insular history and withdrawal from the center stage of international affairs after its tragic World War II experience, however, Japan has not matched its unprecedented economic growth with an equivalent increase in its sense of international responsibility. Concentrating on internal development, the Japanese have been unwilling to assume a role in regional and global affairs proportionate to their growing economic might.<sup>10</sup>

Coinciding generally with the election of Yasuhiro Nakasone as prime minister in 1982, both the political leadership and general public in Japan began to recognize that the nation must significantly expand its international role. The manifestations are numerous. Throughout his long tenure as the first Japanese prime minister in more than a decade to serve beyond a single two-year term, Nakasone infused virtually all of his policies, both domestic and international, with a constant theme: the forging of a new public consensus on the image of Japan as a fully sovereign nation within the international community, possessing the self-confidence and esteem necessary to play a leading role.<sup>11</sup> Referring repeatedly to "general settlement of postwar political accounts," he wanted to sweep away all the stigmas of World



Northeast Asia

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War II, particularly the domestic and international limitations that have restricted Japan's freedom of action.<sup>12</sup> Other segments of the leadership and general public may lag behind Nakasone on these issues; increasingly, though, Japanese from all walks of life have begun to favor greater international activism. The coming generation of political leaders, for example, has no particular sense of guilt over the war and no strong sense of indebtedness to America.<sup>13</sup> As for the public, Nakasone's high approval ratings in public opinion polls were due in large part to his perceived foreign policy successes and the favorable image of Japan he projected on the international stage.<sup>14</sup> Without doubt, Japan is groping to find and establish its proper role as one of the world's major powers.

The difficulty lies in properly defining this role in an increasingly multipolar world and reaching agreement, both domestically and internationally, on the most appropriate and effective means of exercising greater international responsibility. Not only does the Japanese public remain leery of a militarily resurgent Japan, but in addition its neighbors throughout Asia have not forgotten the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere" mentality of World War II. Should Japan strengthen its armed forces and play a greater regional—or even global—security role? Or should it orient its primary effort toward aid and development of underdeveloped countries in Asia and throughout the world? The primary consequence of this dilemma is that Japan is a nation on the verge of significantly changing its



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international outlook, but not yet sure how to translate this new perspective into action. The legacy of its postwar "peace" constitution, renouncing the use of military force except for purely defensive purposes, and the societal need to achieve a national consensus before making major policy changes further complicate the problem. The resolution of this debate and the course Japan chooses to follow will have enormous implications for the Northeast Asian security environment.

*China* presents a marked contrast to Japan, where the internal consensus as to its proper international role is evolving gradually—and often reluctantly—with the growth of its economic power. *China* possesses *no self-doubt* such as Japan's about its rights and obligations as an international power. Since awakening in the middle of the 19th century to its economic and technical backwardness in relation to Western nations, *China* has been searching for the wealth and power that would enable it to play a respected role in the modern world.<sup>15</sup> Whereas Japan seems to be searching for ultimate goals toward which to apply its considerable means, *China* is attempting to develop the means to achieve its considerable goals.

Though *China's* ultimate goal has remained constant, the methods employed to achieve it have varied considerably, resulting in fits and starts of often cataclysmic scale. The promise of the 1911 republican revolution soon disintegrated into the chaos of provincial war lords wielding local power.

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The nationalist regime under Chiang Kai-Shek subsequently unified the country in the 1920s, but was unable to win the full support of the people; Japanese aggression and the communist revolution eventually forced the nationalist retreat to Taiwan. And the communists, despite major economic progress early in Mao Zedong's regime, eventually led the country down paths of major disruption and upheaval during the Great Leap Forward (1958–60) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–69).<sup>16</sup>

A decade after Mao's death, his successors, led by Deng Xiaoping, committed China to another radical departure from the past, characterized by internal political, economic, and social reform and pragmatism rather than ideological transformation. Effort toward completing the "four modernizations" (in agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology) by the middle of the 21st century aims at the same underlying goal as that established in the mid-19th century by the forebears of the original Chinese revolution: to catch up with the world's developed countries and transform China from a weak, internationally isolated nation into a global force.<sup>17</sup>

The key question for China, Northeast Asia, and the world is whether this new revolution is just another temporary disruption or a permanent transformation of Chinese society that will eventually lead to realization of the ambitious goals set forth by the Chinese leaders. And if these goals are achieved, how will China exercise its new-found power? Regarding the first question, many

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observers now believe that China's current reforms have passed the point of no return, despite a recent slowdown in the pace of reform because of conservative forces within the party and government. No longer should the world ask whether the reforms will continue; instead, the pertinent questions are: How far and how fast will they progress, and what form will they ultimately take?<sup>18</sup> Once these issues are resolved, the answer to the second question, obviously of key significance to future regional and global security relationships, will become more clear. Though it is too early to make definitive judgments on these questions, and though the reality of events in China is never quite the same as it appears from the outside, China's enormous potential power necessitates a serious examination of the possibilities.

The *Republic of Korea*, despite a considerably smaller economy than Japan's and much less potential international power than China, plays a no less significant geostrategic role. The Korean Peninsula is a key intersection of opposing regional and global forces: a relatively small piece of real estate that would provide the Soviet Union with both a strong position on China's northeastern flank and a "dagger pointed at the heart of Japan." Its division at the 38th parallel represents the high water mark of Soviet attempts to impose hegemony on the Asian mainland, and the existence of a strong South Korea greatly enhances regional stability and US power and influence in Northeast Asia.<sup>19</sup>

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Since Kim Il Sung's surprise attack across the 38th parallel in 1950, South Korea has been pre-occupied with the North Korean threat. The goals of maintaining strong military forces and building a strong economy, both to support the military and to underscore South Korea's international legitimacy, have until recently relegated internal political development and discussion of the country's broader regional role to the background. Concentration on economic matters has yielded impressive results, as the country's per capita gross national product rose from under \$100 in 1960 to over \$2,300 in 1986; economic growth in 1987 slightly exceeded the 12.5 percent achieved in 1986, and continued at 12 percent in 1988. In contrast to many other developing countries, South Korea has begun to reduce its foreign debt through balance-of-payments surpluses.<sup>20</sup> Such progress has enabled the country to face its enemy to the north with increasing confidence.

As South Korea has achieved success in enhancing its military and economic power relative to the North, however, its horizons have begun to expand beyond the peninsula. Similar to Japan's hosting of the 1964 Olympics—which the Japanese viewed symbolically as a "rejoining" of the international community—the 1988 Olympics in Seoul took on for most South Koreans a meaning and importance far beyond a series of athletic contests among nations. Culminating a multi-year process of holding significant international events and conferences in Seoul—such as a 1985 International Monetary Fund meeting and the 1986 Asian Games, hosting of the Olympics represents

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the country's full flowering as a member of the international community. It will be followed by other equally important actions such as application to join the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, composed of the United States, Japan, and the economically advanced European nations. If it is accepted into this organization, South Korea will move from the developing world into the ranks of the fully industrialized nations.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time that they aim at economic status, the South Korean people also aspire to a mature, fully representative, democratic political system befitting a member of the community of industrialized "Western" democracies. From the time President Chun Doo Hwan, a former army general who seized power through a military coup in 1979, declared his intention to step down at the end of his term in early 1988 to pave the way for the country's first constitutionally sanctioned transfer of power, the ruling party and various popular opposition movements disagreed intensely on such issues as how fast this process should proceed and what final form South Korean democracy should take. Virtually all segments of Korean society, however, generally agreed that the country must revise and legitimize its authoritarian, military-backed political structure. To do less would tarnish the country's international image and preclude the symbolic "coming of age" so broadly and fervently desired.

Dramatic events in the summer of 1987, when extensive demonstrations throughout the country led the ruling party to accede to popular demand

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for a direct presidential election, clearly illustrate this broad consensus. Students, opposition party members, and, most significantly, middle-class Koreans joined forces to induce the previously intransigent government to scrap the indirect election system provided for in the constitution promulgated by Chun after his accession to power. Employing an electoral college composed of prominent South Koreans generally sympathetic to the government, this indirect system was widely perceived by ordinary Koreans as subject to ruling party manipulation that would perpetuate military-backed rule. In a conciliatory change of heart, appearing to demonstrate that its own desire to legitimize the political system was stronger than its desire to perpetuate the ruling elite, the government agreed to join the opposition in drafting a new constitution based on direct popular elections. Though many issues must still be worked out and potentially serious pitfalls remain, the new South Korean president most likely possessed a stronger mandate from the South Korean people than any previous ruler, a major step toward achieving a truly representative democracy.

Some have declared that South Korea is currently fashioning a political miracle to match the continuing economic miracle that has propelled it to the forefront of developing nations. Discounting the possible hyperbole, the country is clearly making astounding economic and political progress and moving inexorably forward in its ambitious plans to fully join the international community. As this progress continues, South

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Koreans will reexamine and redefine their security interests. Though North Korea will continue to be the main focus, such redefinition will almost certainly entail a broader regional role beyond containment of North Korea and maintenance of stability on the Korean Peninsula.

In the *Soviet Union*, the ascendancy of Mikhail Gorbachev in the power structure appears to have led to a significant change in the Soviet attitude toward Asia, especially the Northeast Asian countries closest to its borders. Looking at the strong economic and friendly diplomatic and security ties that have characterized the US position in the region, and contrasting this situation with the Soviet Union's declining influence in virtually all areas but naked military power, Gorbachev has launched a campaign to redress this adverse balance—or, in Soviet terms, correlation of forces—and focus on the Far East as a new arena for superpower competition in all areas of international influence.<sup>22</sup> In his Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev notably downplayed the role of Soviet Far East military forces and appeared to be seeking a reduction of regional tensions by attempting to create new diplomatic and economic relations with China and Japan.

But does the new emphasis on diplomacy and economic relations signal a shift in Soviet policy from one of seeking hegemony over the region to one of pursuing mutual interdependence, coexistence, and support? Or do the Soviets want to assist their economic development through favorable relations with regional states but in so doing

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to create both the internal and external conditions necessary to project power and extend their global influence? Rather than diminishing their reliance on military power in the region—there is yet little indication that the Soviets intend to suspend or reverse the quantitative and qualitative growth in Soviet Far East forces<sup>23</sup>—the Soviets may be trying to make more sophisticated and effective use of other instruments of national power to complement military capabilities.

Soviet moves in Asia, of course, are part of the Soviets' global strategy for competing with the West. In Northeast Asia as in other regions of the world, Gorbachev appears to be seeking a relaxation of international tension and confrontation that will allow the Soviet Union to concentrate on economic modernization. Whether this is a tactical expedient designed to disarm potential enemies and buy time for an even greater buildup of military power, or a long-term change in overall strategy for competing with the United States and the West, it carries enormous significance for regional and global security. The favorable change in the overall correlation of forces being pursued by the Soviets has the goal of increasing Soviet influence throughout Asia to the detriment of the US position, and of establishing the Soviet Union as an Asian power superior or at least equal to the United States. The true intent behind the new Soviet initiatives and how the United States and its regional friends and allies respond to those initiatives will play a significant part in shaping future security relationships in Northeast Asia and the world.



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#### THE CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The *Democratic People's Republic of Korea* is perhaps the most difficult piece to place in the Northeast Asia security puzzle. North Korea is a land of contradictions: a communist state ruled by a dynastic family through methods based on Confucian paternalism; a nation stressing self-reliance (Kim Il Sung's principle of *juche*) as its paramount national goal but dependent on China and the Soviet Union for its survival. It achieved high economic growth and industrialization after the Korean War—possibly even outperforming its rival to the south in per capita output until the middle of the 1970s—but is now rapidly falling behind in overall economic power.<sup>21</sup> Its international behavior has led it to become viewed as a pariah state, yet it is beginning to show signs of attempting to expand and diversify its international economic and political contacts. Finally, it is a nation sworn to reunification of the Korean Peninsula on its own terms, maintaining the world's sixth largest armed forces and a constant flow of propaganda and invective against the South Korean regime, but which has recently been willing to establish peaceful contacts with its hated enemies in a number of areas.<sup>25</sup>

Several forces are converging in North Korea, making the coming years a time for critical decision. At stake is the country's claim to legitimacy as an independent nation representing the aspirations of the entire Korean people, a claim beginning to lose its validity with the growing international stature and power of the ROK. The North's lagging economic performance relative to the South is rapidly depleting its ability to

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maintain a military advantage. The "window of opportunity" is closing in which it could reasonably expect to conquer the South militarily, by perhaps taking advantage of an international crisis temporarily limiting the ability of the United States to assist the ROK.<sup>26</sup> If present trends continue, the ROK will gradually be able to stand on its own with minimal US support.

Additionally, North Korea is finding it increasingly difficult to balance its relationships with China and the Soviet Union so as to further its primary interest of maintaining national independence. The social, political, and economic forces at work in the region are rapidly changing the geopolitical structure that has enabled the North for many years to subtly and successfully play the two communist giants against one another.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the North Koreans are faced with the problem of how to rejuvenate their lagging economic performance. The only solution appears to be the road of greater liberalization and internationalization currently being followed by China. To abandon Soviet-style central planning, however, will inevitably loosen the iron grip the ruling regime maintains on the population and force a modification of the intense xenophobia through which the regime has viewed the outside world for decades.<sup>28</sup>

North Korea's situation is aptly characterized by a Korean proverb: "When whales fight, the shrimp's back is broken." The North Korean leadership not only must deal with a rapidly growing rival to the south, but also must contend with the world's two largest nations by area and population

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to the north and west, one of the world's preeminent economic powers across a narrow sea to the east, and, lurking beyond but never wholly out of view, the greatest power of all in the United States.<sup>29</sup> It is understandable that North Korea views itself as the shrimp. Far out of proportion to its size, however, the methods and means North Korea employs to prevent its back from being broken will significantly affect the future security environment in Northeast Asia.

Northeast Asia is indeed a region in ferment: national aspirations, grand political and economic experiments, and new geopolitical approaches are converging, threatening to drastically alter the security landscape fashioned during the postwar era. These more recently spawned forces are further mixed with the strong regional legacy of great historical empires, cultural traditions, and ancient conflicts. The result is a complex of historical and modern forces that the United States must understand if it is to develop and implement coherent security policies. We must examine several interrelated questions to determine the overall effect on US interests:

- Will these forces lead to an expanded community of interests and, hence, increased cohesion among US friends and allies on security issues, accelerating the emerging trends toward increased defense cooperation noted earlier? Or will each nation chart its own course, fearful of its neighbors' power and unwilling to sacrifice independent action to establish a stronger regional coalition?

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- How will the Soviet Union view Northeast Asia in its future regional and global strategic calculations?
- Are existing US bilateral treaties, alliances, and friendships with Northeast Asian nations sufficient for meeting future regional and global threats?
- Should the United States follow a policy of "laissez faire" with regard to security relations among US friends and allies in Northeast Asia, or play the role of catalyst in attempting to establish a stronger security coalition?
- What should the US role be in a strengthened Northeast Asian security coalition?

To shed light on these issues, subsequent chapters analyze the complex forces interacting in Northeast Asia, in both the domestic and regional contexts, attempt to identify and predict their likely effects on regional security relations, and propose general policy prescriptions most likely to enhance US regional and global interests.

As the analysis proceeds, two fundamental themes will become apparent. First, security in the modern age can no longer be viewed purely in terms of military forces and combat power. Whether seen through the Soviet lens of "correlation of forces" or through the general Western conception of the various "components" of national power, political, economic, and social factors cannot be separated from military capability (indeed *all* these factors are interdependent) when assessing the security of individual nations, alliances, and coalitions.

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Second, an increasingly interdependent world economy makes it extremely difficult to separate the national security interests of one nation from those of another. Thus, whether a nation desires to "go it alone" in assuring its security or to seek alliance or coalition with other nations, it must still consider the effects of its actions on other nations as well as the effects of other nations' actions on it. Isolationism as a security policy is no longer viable for a major power.

The strongest coalitions and alliances result when nations share common political, economic, social, and cultural interests that are endangered by a tangible threat. NATO is the supreme example of such an alliance. Previously divisive historical and cultural factors were overcome at the close of World War II because of two factors: the strong postwar political, economic, and social community of interest that developed among West European countries and the United States, and the generally common view of the threat represented by an expansionist Soviet empire. Whether similar conditions will ever exist in Northeast Asia or throughout the Asian-Pacific region is an open question; nevertheless, we need to identify the factors that will influence future regional security relationships and predict trends and patterns as much as possible. When dealing with a region of long historical traditions, this process should most appropriately begin with the past.

## Two

### THE EMERGING TRIANGLE: CHINA—JAPAN—SOUTH KOREA

Geopolitical analysts often speak in terms of triangles when discussing strategic relationships among nation-states. Several such triangles with relevance to Northeast Asia are currently in vogue. One is the United States—China—Soviet Union triangle, a grouping of the world's three major powers whose interests intersect in Northeast Asia. Alternatively, Soviet theorists have sharpened their focus on another triangle, that comprising the United States, China, and Japan, which they fear as an increasing threat to the Soviet Far East. Still another is the "iron triangle," postulated by A. James Gregor and Maria Hsia Chang, composed of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Gregor and Chang believe the United States should concentrate its security efforts in Asia on this triangle as the prime bulwark against the three major communist states in the region: the Soviet Union, China, and Vietnam.

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Certainly, all these triangles are significant to one degree or another; this study, however, focuses on another key triangular relationship developing among the three major US friends and allies in Northeast Asia—the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. This Northeast Asian triangle is characterized by a growing confluence of economic, political, and security interests, deemed by noted Asian scholar Robert A. Scalapino as an emerging "soft regionalism" among the three countries.<sup>1</sup> This nascent regional perspective in the individual countries of the triangle has potentially far-reaching implications for US regional security policy.

Through most of the postwar era, the lack of any significant regional outlook in any of the three countries not only limited *their relations* with each other but also prevented US policymakers from establishing a single focus for US regional security efforts. Of necessity, several foci have emerged, each requiring a separate bilateral relationship of varying strength and characteristics. The resulting security situation is extremely complex. Of the five nations discussed in the brief tour in the previous chapter, the United States can *count two allies, one friend, and two threats* in the region.

Unique features characterize the two alliances. That with Japan is essentially one-sided: the United States is obligated to come to Japan's aid if Japan is attacked, but no reciprocal charge (with the exception of a vague commitment to provide logistic support, or "facilitative assistance" in the event of a second Korean conflict) is

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incumbent on Japan if the United States is attacked elsewhere in the region. The union with Korea is based on a limited threat confined essentially to the peninsula. The US friendship with China is with a nation still professing to be a communist state and striving for independence from the two superpowers it has viewed in the past as imperialist states vying for world domination.

Perceptions regarding security threats in the region are no less disparate. Japan and China share the US perception that the Soviet Union is the primary threat, but with varying opinions on the immediacy and seriousness of Soviet intentions and capabilities. For its part, South Korea has understandable difficulty looking much beyond North Korea. And despite growing Soviet–North Korean collusion, the three triangle nations view North Korea even more diversely: as the primary threat by South Korea, as no direct threat to itself but an indirect threat to stability and prosperity by Japan, and as a friend and erstwhile ally by China. The emergence of a more regional outlook in China, Japan, and South Korea, tenuous though it may seem at present, requires the United States itself to take a more holistic approach if US regional security policy is to retain its effectiveness.

A good case can be made, nevertheless, for treating Northeast Asia as a separate and important region. All three nations making up the Northeast Asian triangle have societies based on Confucian traditions of hard work, discipline, and acceptance of strong, legitimate authority to guide the nation. Though each is at a different stage of



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development, all three have made economic progress the centerpiece of their programs for achieving their ultimate destinies. The experience of Japan and the "four tigers" of Asia - Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore - indicates the success societies organized on such principles can achieve. Indeed, since Hong Kong will become part of China in 1997, and leaders in both China and Taiwan agree that there is only one China of which Taiwan must some day be part, China, Japan, and Korea encompass all the Confucian-based societies in Asia except Singapore, which is nonetheless dominated by overseas Chinese, and Vietnam, which has chosen, with little success, to follow the Soviet model of economic development. The countries of the Northeast Asian triangle thus are truly the dynamic hub of Asian-Pacific development; they possess the greatest potential for power and influence in the Asian-Pacific region, in addition to their potential for global importance.

Consequently, the nature of this Northeast Asian triangle will be critically important to future Asian-Pacific security relationships. It will significantly affect US relations with each individual nation and must in large part determine US responses to the two major military threats in the region, the Soviet Union and North Korea. Ultimately, the nature of the triangle will have a global impact through its influence on US-Soviet security relations.

To begin a detailed exploration of the future shape of the triangle, we need first to look to the past. The Northeast Asian triangle has a long and

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varied history that contains many of the keys to the current situation as well as future directions.

#### THE ANCIENT LEGACY: CULTURAL BONDS AND CONFLICTS

The common history of China, Japan, and Korea has been dichotomous, characterized by shared cultural traditions on the one hand and intensive nationalistic development on the other.<sup>2</sup> The population of all three countries stems from Mongoloid stock, with apparent origins in what is now north central China and Manchuria. In pre-historic times, migration occurred from these areas to Korea and eventually from Korea to Japan, forming the basis for the dominant, homogeneous population in each country. Early divergences in each country, however, are apparent in the origins of the three languages. The various Chinese dialects belong to what has become known as the Sinitic (or Sino-Tibetan) family of languages, while the Japanese and Korean languages are believed to stem from the Altaic language family, named after the Altai Mountains in Mongolia. Though sharing a common heritage and hence similar in some respects, the Korean and Japanese languages differ considerably, their divergence at least partly a result of the separation of the Japanese islands from the north Asian mainland. Consequently, despite the proximity of the three nations, their spoken languages evolved along distinctly individual lines, foreshadowing the intensity of their later nationalistic development.

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Culturally, the predominant direction of flow was from the Chinese, who produced a distinctive civilization much earlier than the other two nations. The Chinese transmitted their written language, Confucian philosophy with its accompanying system of social and political organization, and religious concepts such as Buddhism to both Korea and Japan while they were yet in the early stages of their development. Due to its overland proximity to China, facilitating vigorous Chinese influence through peaceful settlement, commerce, and invasion, Korea developed a society closely resembling the Chinese, albeit with distinct Korean characteristics. Japan, on the other hand, though importing a great deal of Chinese and some Korean culture, came to contrast sharply with both in social and political structure, once again most likely because of Japan's isolation from the Asian mainland. The written languages of the three countries epitomize individual development patterns. Although Japan and Korea adopted Chinese characters early on, they both subsequently invented their own alphabets and modified the use of Chinese characters to suit the distinctive needs of their individual languages. Similar patterns held sway in most areas of cultural progress until growing contacts with the West in the 19th century elicited varied responses from each country.

Militarily, domination and conflict, rather than cooperation, best characterize historical relations among the three countries. China, of course, was the major domineering power, with Japan, because of its insular position, the least

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dominated. Having the geographic misfortune of occupying the middle ground between the two, Korea suffered repeated attempts at domination by both.

China exercised various forms of dominion over Korea from earliest recorded times. In 192 - 108 B.C. China conquered and established colonies over the northern two-thirds of the Korean Peninsula, exercising a rule similar to that of the Roman Empire over Britain. Subsequent revolts and periodic warfare eventually resulted in the demise of these Chinese colonies during the 4th century. Both countries then went through periods of internal dissension with various sub-states vying for overall control. Despite diminution of its military control, China continued its cultural domination, with Chinese kingdoms continuing to exact tribute from Korean kingdoms until reunification of China under a single dynasty in the 6th century.

China subsequently attempted, through both land and sea invasion, to conquer the three Korean kingdoms and once again incorporate the peninsula into its empire. Initially, the Chinese were unsuccessful, with failed expeditions against the northern Korean kingdom of Koguryo (from which the name Korea is derived) contributing significantly to the downfall of the Chinese Sui dynasty and its replacement by the Tang in the early 7th century. Aiding the southern Korean kingdom of Silla against the two other Korean kingdoms, China was finally able to subdue the peninsula in the latter part of the century. Expectations of incorporating Korea in the Chinese

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empire quickly faded, however, as Silla rallied the Korean kingdoms it had conquered with Chinese assistance against the threat of total subjugation by China. The Chinese were effectively driven out within a decade, and Korea was unified for the first time under the Silla dynasty, occupying the greater part of the land area that today constitutes the peninsula.

Despite a continuing tributary relationship with China, wholesale adoption of Chinese concepts of political and social organization, and further attempts at foreign control from the mainland, most notably from Manchu peoples to the north and the Mongols during their period of suzerainty over China, Korea managed to maintain its national autonomy down to modern times. Of all the world's nations, it claims a history as a unified political entity second in duration only to that of China.

Unlike Korea, Japan was never invaded by Chinese armies. Though strongly influenced by Chinese culture, much of it brought early in Japanese history through migration from Korea (a steady flow of people from Korea to Japan lasted until the early 9th century). Japan's relative isolation resulted in a much slower and less thorough penetration of Chinese influence. Indigenous internal development thus played a much greater role in Japan than in Korea, and Japanese society evolved quite differently than the Chinese or Korean. The eventual result, in contrast to the highly centralized, civilian rule of China and Korea, was a decentralized feudal system emphasizing martial arts and values.

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The system did face serious external threats, most prominently the attempt by the Mongols to invade and establish control over Japan after they had encompassed China within the Mongol empire. That the individual knights, or samurai, of Japan could have withstood the superior numbers, massed cavalry tactics, and weapons of the Mongol armies is doubtful. But weather intervened twice on the Japanese side, the second time destroying at sea the Mongol fleet and much of a 140,000-man Mongol, Chinese, and Korean invasion force in a sudden typhoon—providing the origin of the *kamikaze* ("divine wind") legend that was resurrected in World War II. Until Japan's growing contact with the West in the 19th century, the attempted Mongol invasion was the only serious threat to national sovereignty faced by the Japanese.

The Japanese were not, however, immune from trying to dominate others. Though sporadic pirate raids and small-scale attacks on peripheral territories and possessions of the other two nations characterized Japan's aggression through most of its ancient history, the Japanese did make two major attempts, organized on a national scale, to dominate Northeast Asia. The first was in the 6th century when a reunified China was attempting to establish control over the Korean Peninsula. Japan sent an expedition to aid one of the three Korean kingdoms against a Chinese sea-borne invasion, but the expedition was repulsed, setting the stage for Korean unification assisted by the Chinese.

The Japanese military leader Hideyoshi had much grander designs in the late 16th century.

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After reuniting Japan politically through military force, Hideyoshi, entertaining dreams of empire, organized an army of 160,000 men to conquer China. Unfortunately for the Koreans, their country stood squarely in Japan's desired line of advance. The Koreans refused Hideyoshi the free passage he asked them for, so the Japanese invaded Korea, quickly subduing the entire peninsula. Foreshadowing the Chinese reaction to the primarily American and South Korean invasion of North Korea during the Korean War centuries later, the Chinese sent their forces across the Yalu River to dislodge the Japanese. A six-year war ensued, characterized by swings in control by Chinese and Japanese forces, extended truce talks, and a second Japanese invasion. Chinese land armies assisted by Korean naval forces eventually prevailed and drove the Japanese off the peninsula. For Korea, the Japanese invasion was an unmitigated disaster, causing great cultural, economic, and political disruption; it was a landmark event in forging strong, deeply felt mutual antagonism between the two countries.

### *MODERN HISTORY: RESPONSES TO THE WEST*

By the time contacts between the Northeast Asian countries and expanding Western nations increased during the 19th century, China, Japan, and Korea had all developed strong, proud, but essentially inward-looking traditional civilizations. Each country, however, responded differently to the new challenges posed by the West, with Korea the most resistant to the outside world and Japan

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the most willing to initiate political reform and industrial modernization. China initially struggled against change, but eventually overcame the inertia of traditional patterns and a long history of intellectual and material self-sufficiency.

The most consequential result of these diverse responses is that while China and Korea languished in social and political uncertainty, material and scientific backwardness, and unwillingness to undertake major reform, Japan instituted the Meiji Restoration, using Western knowledge and methods to modernize the country and compete with the West on its own terms. Beginning in the late 1860s, Japan's new leaders completely revamped the nation's political and social structure by replacing the feudal samurai system with a modern centralized government based on the emperor as a symbol of national unity. They also developed an impressive industrial and technical base modeled on the advanced Western countries, and eventually began using the nation's newly developed economic and military power to compete on a more or less equal basis with the Western powers for influence and control in East Asia. And as feelings of strength and superiority had led Hideyoshi across the Korea Strait in the 16th century, Japan's new rulers, feeling new power, turned their aspirations toward China and Korea.

Until 1876, Korea had successfully resisted all attempts by Western powers to "open" the country as Commodore Perry and his "black ships" had done with Japan in 1853. But in a display of its enhanced international stature, Japan succeeded



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where the West had failed. Employing an imposing fleet of warships and transports anchored off Inchon, Japan forced Korea to accede to an unequal treaty, clearly modeled on Western treaties with China and Japan, opening Korean ports to Japanese trade. This event touched off an intense rivalry between China and Japan for influence in Korea. The Japanese push for radical modernization of Korean government and society opposed the Chinese desire for only moderate reforms along the lines of its own modest attempts to come to grips with Western influence.

A decade of Chinese and Japanese posturing over the Korean issue, during which Japan continued its military modernization and China attempted to redress its laggard response to the Western and Japanese imperialism by instituting its own modernization program, eventually erupted in the Sino-Japanese War of 1895. Though possessing much larger forces, China's belated modernization efforts proved glaringly insufficient; the qualitatively superior Japanese forces, particularly the navy, easily prevailed. Japan seized the whole of Korea, invaded Manchuria, and decisively defeated the Chinese fleet at the mouth of the Yalu River. Forced to sue for peace, the Chinese accepted the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which reaffirmed Korean independence from China, ceded Taiwan to Japan, and established Japanese control over the Kwangtung Peninsula in Southern Manchuria.

At about the same time, the threat of an expansionist Russian empire first began to make its influence felt in modern Northeast Asian

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affairs. In order to advance its own territorial ambitions in Manchuria and Korea, Russia persuaded both Germany and France to join in a diplomatic intervention that forced Japan to give up its claim to the Kwangtung Peninsula in exchange for an additional indemnity. Japan, however, had proved its essential equality with the Western imperial powers. Underscoring this fact, Britain and Japan entered into the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, the first military pact on equal terms between a Western nation and an Asian nation. The pact was clearly aimed at thwarting Russian designs on Northeast Asian territory, setting the stage for the Russo-Japanese War in 1904.

When Russian forces began to occupy Manchuria, Japan sent its army through Korea and across the Yalu River to drive the Russian army back to the north. The rapid Japanese advance led the Tsar to send the Russian Baltic fleet to the Far East in an attempt to stem the tide, but the Japanese fleet under Admiral Togo intercepted the Russian fleet in the Korea (Tsushima) Strait and annihilated it, ending the war and firmly establishing Japan's dominance in Northeast Asian affairs. Under the Treaty of Portsmouth, which in theory returned Manchuria to Chinese sovereignty, it was the Russians' turn to recognize Japan's "paramount interest" in Korea and cede the Kwangtung Peninsula to Japanese control. Japan had firmly established its credentials as an imperialist power.

The central theme in relations among Northeast Asian nations from this point until the end of

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World War II was that of Japan attempting to further expand and consolidate its empire. Its goal eventually became the full integration of Korea and China into the "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere." In 1910, Japan annexed Korea as a full-fledged colony. Though developing the Korean economy in many respects, Japan's severe rule—in the form of economic exploitation, strict limitations on political and individual freedoms, and forced resettlement of Korean workers in Japan, Manchuria, Sakhalin, and other areas—added to the legacy of Hideyoshi's invasion in the 16th century, heightened the animosity between the two peoples.

With regard to China, Japan attempted to exploit the chaotic situation that developed after China's 1911 republican revolution, with provincial warlords holding local power and Chinese nationalists and communists struggling for overall control. The ambitious scope of Japanese plans for the region became fully evident with Japan's annexation of Manchuria in 1932 under the puppet state of Manchukuo and, finally, with its full-scale invasion of China in 1937.

The great significance for Northeast Asia of Japan's defeat in World War II, and the outcome of the war in general, was an effective end to the long history of one Northeast Asian nation exercising dominion (what today is usually referred to as hegemony) over another. Of course, the de facto agreement to partition Korea at the 38th parallel, resulting from Soviet and US forces moving into the north and south respectively to accept the Japanese surrender, renewed the

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occupation of the country by outside powers. The United States and the Soviet Union each attempted to establish a government in its zone of control based upon its own national values and guiding principles, with the Soviets seemingly better prepared and facing a less complex task. By 1948, however, both Soviet and US forces had withdrawn from Korea.

The immediate national aim of the North Korean regime, headed by Kim Il Sung, was to reunify the peninsula under a communist government. The perceived weakness of the South Korean government, along with a misinterpretation of US intent to defend the country after Secretary of State Acheson did not mention the Korean Peninsula in defining US global security interests, led to the Soviet- and Chinese-backed North Korean invasion of the south in 1950. Under the auspices of the United Nations, the United States succeeded in rolling back the invasion after the Inchon landing and subsequently invaded North Korea, pushing communist forces back to the Yalu River. This US success eventually led the Chinese to intervene, much as they had against Hideyoshi's Japanese invasion hundreds of years earlier, the same geopolitical concern for China's own security playing a major role in the decision.

The truce of 1953 essentially reestablished the post-World War II status quo, with two strongly nationalistic and independent-minded Koreas pursuing their own national goals, the influence of respective major power benefactors notwithstanding. The four Northeast Asian

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nations were essentially left to fashion their own responses to a rapidly modernizing world characterized by growing competition between the two developing superpowers.

#### *CURRENT CONDITIONS*

History continues to play an important role in defining security relationships in Northeast Asia, but the end of World War II seems to have marked a historical watershed. In social, economic, and geopolitical terms, the world has become a different place. The postwar alignment of nations, brought about by the advent of nuclear weapons and the rise of a bipolar world dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, has had profound effects in Northeast Asia, just as elsewhere around the globe. Rapid advances in science and technology coupled with unprecedented economic progress in the postwar world—initially led by the United States, subsequently bequeathed to devastated Europe and Japan, now inherited by the world's newly industrializing countries—has resulted in an increasingly interdependent world economy. The accompanying communication and information revolution has made the international environment more than ever before a battleground of ideas and concepts in a struggle that has assumed importance equal to that of military power. Thus, a unique blend of historical and modern influences is shaping the future in Northeast Asia, moderating strongly nationalistic and independent tendencies with new, and in many cases not yet fully developed nor fully understood, cohesive forces.

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Do the cohesive forces influencing US friends and allies in Northeast Asia represent a radical departure from the conditions existing in the region throughout its long history? Or, phrased differently, will the emerging "soft regionalism" Scalapino sees evolve into a stronger security relationship, possibly even a formal alliance? In Western Europe the postwar influences mentioned before led to a singular departure from the historical norm of conflict among the nations and peoples of the region. Though nationalistic beliefs and tendencies in Europe remain, establishment of NATO, the European Economic Community, and other trans-European economic and political organizations have resulted from unprecedented military, economic, and political cooperation among member states. A major impetus for these developments, of course, has been that the United States and the Soviet Union made Europe the centerpiece of their global competition. Given that circumstance, the proximity of the Soviet empire to Western Europe, in contrast to the relative distance of the United States, made such cooperation essential to the survival of individual West European nations.

In Northeast Asia, evolution of the postwar security environment followed a markedly dissimilar course. China, after initial alignment in the American orbit, chose through civil war the Marxist path to economic and political development, and eventually allied itself with the Soviet Union. The Korean Peninsula remained divided, leaving Japan as the only possible anchor for US regional security policy. The Korean War turned the

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eastern extremity of the Eurasian continent into a second strategic front in the superpower rivalry.<sup>3</sup> But despite this conflict and, later, the Vietnam War, Asia retained only secondary importance in the overall strategic calculations of the United States and the Soviet Union. Indeed, US security policy in Asia was more directed against a Chinese, rather than Soviet, threat.

The "emerging centrality of Asia" for both superpowers, however, is rapidly changing their strategic calculations. Brought about by the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s, the rise of Japan in the 1960s as a global economic power, the more recent economic development in the 1970s of newly industrializing South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, and, finally, growing economic progress in many countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Far East has achieved an overall strategic importance equal to that of Europe.<sup>4</sup> In fact, many strategic analysts believe that through its rapid military buildup in the Far East and recent diplomatic and economic initiatives, the Soviets are transferring their effort to a new front in order to "break out" of the, for them, unpromising situation in Europe. Therefore, the nations of the Northeast Asian triangle, with their contiguous borders and maritime proximity to the Soviet Far East, their enormous economic capacity (particularly when considering Taiwan and Hong Kong as part of China), and the potential military strength inherent in strong, mature economies, seem to be moving toward a role increasingly analogous to that Europe has held for so many years

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in the security equation between the superpowers. Indeed, the Northeast Asian triangle may be facing a security challenge significantly different from any that has heretofore existed throughout the long history of its sovereign states.

Despite the new security environment, no formal alliance even remotely resembling NATO has begun to emerge in Northeast Asia. The Northeast Asian triangle has no agreed upon consultation procedures and institutions to clearly define its shape. Instead, the shape of the triangle—the length of its sides and the measures of its angles—are variable according to the three countries' perceptions of themselves and the outside world in the current situation. Four principal factors will determine whether this shape will solidify as the region moves toward the next century: (1) the historical legacy discussed in this chapter; (2) the internal changes occurring in each country and their effect on regional economic, political, and social relationships; (3) the direction and magnitude of the Soviet and North Korean threats; and (4) US responses and actions.



### Three TOWARD A STRONGER TRIANGLE

Despite the general picture of warfare, subjugation, and rivalry that emerges from the historical record of relations among China, Japan, and Korea, there have been periods of relative unity and peace. For example, after the conflicts of the 6th and 7th centuries, during which both China and Japan attempted through military power to exert their influence over the divided Korean Peninsula, a more or less golden era of peace ensued. Korea was eventually unified as a sovereign nation under the Silla dynasty. China achieved the height of its cultural tradition and influence under the Tang, and Japan established its first permanent national capital during the Nara period. As a result, the region exploded in a spectacular flowering of culture based on Buddhism from India. It was one of the rare periods in East Asia's history when major capitals of Asia—Kyongju in Korea, Changan in China, and Nara in Japan—were on the same cultural

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wavelength, communicating and trading briskly with each other through the common medium of Han (Chinese) letters, with much travel back and forth among the countries.<sup>1</sup>

As the 21st century approaches, will it witness the dawn of an era in Northeast Asian relations akin to that of the Silla-Tang-Nara, this time on the "common wavelength" of similar economic, political, and social aspirations? Turning now to the second of the four factors influencing the future shape of the Northeast Asian triangle, the specific question to be examined is whether the internal changes currently occurring in the triangle nations, coupled with the new historical forces of the postwar era, will produce a "hardening" of Scalapino's "soft regionalism," leading to, if not an economic, social, and political entity closely resembling that of NATO Europe, at least an association providing stronger links than now exist in all these areas.

#### *ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE*

There can be no doubt that economic interdependence is on the rise among the nations of the Northeast Asian triangle. One indication of the trend, of course, lies in the volume of trade among the three countries. Looking first at Japan and Korea, the economies of both countries depend heavily on exports, with the United States their major trading partner, accounting for approximately 30 percent of total trade volume for both.<sup>2</sup> After trade with the United States, however, Japan-Korea trade, on the order of \$10

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billion a year,<sup>3</sup> has become extremely important to both nations. Before a large rise in Sino-Japanese trade in 1985, Japan's second largest national market after the United States had been South Korea, while South Korea's second largest market remains Japan.<sup>4</sup> Korean economic growth, moreover, is heavily dependent on Japanese trade and investment for technology and capital. Pumping over \$100 million per year into the South Korean economy in the 1975-84 period, Japan is easily the largest overseas investor in South Korea, measured both in terms of the number of projects and cumulative value.<sup>5</sup> Despite their growing competition in world export markets and Korean grievances over its \$2-3 billion per year trade deficits with Japan, both countries need each other. Korea, for example, needs to import from Japan machines, motors, and parts necessary to sustain Korean shipbuilding, automobile, and consumer electronics industries. Conversely, Japan needs finished materials such as cheap Korean steel to maintain the global competitiveness of its own auto industry.<sup>6</sup>

Since beginning its modernization drive and opening to the outside world in the late 1970s, China has emerged as an important new factor in trade—and hence regional economic interdependence—for both Japan and Korea. From \$15 billion in 1977, China's total trade grew to \$70 billion in 1985,<sup>7</sup> and both Japan and Korea are making earnest efforts to integrate China into their international trade spheres. Japan has achieved particular success, capturing the world's largest share—more than one-quarter—of the rapidly rising total

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Chinese trade volume.<sup>8</sup> After several years of modest growth in the early 1980s, Japan's China trade burgeoned to \$18.9 billion in 1985, growing 44 percent from the previous year. The rapid growth was primarily the result of Chinese internal economic reforms and external trade liberalization policies implemented in 1985. The new policies generated increased income, particularly in the agricultural sector, and allowed consumer goods and machinery to be imported on a large scale. Though much of the rapid rise in 1985 was due to these unique factors, the two countries continue to see high long-term potential in their complementary economic relationship. Japan sees itself as the primary supplier of critical technology, capital, and management skills that China desperately needs to continue its modernization, while China looks to Japan as the major market for its mineral and farm product exports and eventually—as the country improves its technological and industrial base—for manufactured products as well.<sup>9</sup>

South Korea seems, of course, to face conspicuously more severe obstacles in its attempts to incorporate China into its expanding trade domain. China and South Korea fought each other bitterly during the Korean War and have as yet to consummate a peace agreement or establish any official relations. Significantly, though, these obstacles have not prevented the two countries from undertaking a mutually beneficial economic relationship that also holds high potential for future growth. Despite the indirect nature of their trade links, which run primarily through Hong

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Kong, China and South Korea have exchanged goods at an increasing rate since the early 1980s, with various estimates placing the total volume toward \$1 billion in the late 1980s.<sup>10</sup>

This volume may seem an inconsequential portion of China's total trade volume (at most approximately 1.5 percent) or the overwhelming size of Japan's China trade. But when compared to China's trade with its ostensible ally, North Korea, whom China supported extensively with men and materiel against the South in the Korean War and with whom it currently maintains full relations and open borders, it takes on a significance of much greater proportion. Though accurate figures on Chinese-North Korean trade are difficult to obtain, reports indicate that China's trade with North Korea has been on the decrease in recent years, supplanted by increasing North Korean trade with the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> The result: China's South Korea trade appears to easily surpass that with the North.<sup>12</sup>

This trend is unmistakably borne out by South Korean government, business, and academic officials, who in fact see vast potential for the ROK to fill an important niche in China's modernization program. Korea provides consumer goods more attuned to Chinese needs and intermediate technology and capital goods more readily adaptable to China's developing economy than more sophisticated US, Japanese, and European products.<sup>13</sup> As concrete examples, South Korea's Daewoo conglomerate has made an investment (through a Hong Kong-based subsidiary) in refrigerator and other consumer appliance

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production in China's Fujian province, and South Korean business executives on "private visits" have become increasingly present in China.<sup>14</sup> For its part, South Korea is a logical market for natural resources and agricultural products from China. Recent government efforts to open a trade representative's office in Beijing further reveal South Korea's enthusiasm and optimism regarding the China market.<sup>15</sup>

To be sure, the scale to which Japan and South Korea can integrate China into their international trade structures—hence, the rate at which interdependence among the three economies will grow—depends largely on whether China can modernize at the rate its leaders desire. In 1985, then Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang clearly delineated China's long-term economic aim: to catch up with the world's developed countries by the middle of the 21st century. To reach that goal, per capita annual income would have to rise at 5.5 percent a year for the next 60 years, rising from \$300 to approximately \$3,000. As an interim goal, the government hopes to quadruple national output between 1980 and 2000 and raise per capita income to \$800. A 1985 World Bank report concluded that these interim targets are feasible, and could in fact be exceeded, if China continues economic reforms and uses all available resources efficiently.<sup>16</sup>

Despite such optimism, though, the "ifs" loom rather larger when one explores the issue of China's political will to continue the necessary reforms. While he held the top position in the Chinese political leadership, beginning in 1978,

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Deng Xiaoping attempted to institutionalize his reform policies by placing his followers and allies in key leadership positions so that when he passed from the scene the momentum of the policies would continue. Internal political turmoil in late 1986 and early 1987 cast considerable doubt on Deng's ability to achieve this goal, however. Widespread demonstrations at Chinese universities, during which students pressed for increased economic and political pluralism, enabled "conservative" forces within the party and government bureaucracies, generally opposed to both the scale and pace of the reform program, to force the resignation of numerous key officials in favor of rapid reform, most notably Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang who was one of Deng's chosen proteges. The result was an apparent stalling or scaling back of the reform program, despite attempts by Hu's successor, Zhao Ziyang, and other officials to placate fears that reforms would be entirely abandoned. Price reforms, for example, essential to increasing economic efficiency by more fully integrating market forces into the Chinese economy, were indefinitely delayed.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, many analysts of Chinese affairs believe that the country has passed the point of no return, already unleashing forces that cannot be "put back into the bottle" and that will sustain their own momentum. China specialist Michel Oksenberg, for example, believes that China has traveled too far down the path of reform to allow a complete halt or reversal in the future. Instead, he postulated a relatively brief hiatus during which reform efforts would slow down, but after

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which they would resume their inevitable course.<sup>18</sup> In fact, signs that reformers were regaining some of the ground lost in the aftermath of the student demonstrations and Hu's ouster began to surface within months. Official government newspapers began to tone down attacks on "bourgeois liberalism" and capitalist tendencies and replace them with articles once again emphasizing the importance and achievements of economic change.<sup>19</sup> Despite claims by officials such as Communist Party Politburo member and National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Peng Zhen, believed to be one of the staunchest conservative leaders, that there are no "reformist" or "conservative" factions, but only a "Marxist faction" within the Chinese leadership,<sup>20</sup> there appears to be an intense ongoing struggle to decide who will guide the nation's destiny.

Given the long-term nature of reform goals—many Chinese view a period of "a hundred years or more" as being required<sup>21</sup>—coupled with the goals' as yet vague and indeterminate nature, fits and starts are going to be part of the process. China has made a firm decision to modernize and has opened the country enough to awaken the expectations and pride of its people. As they look at the economic dynamism of their neighbors and cultural kinsmen in East Asia—in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—the Chinese cannot help but feel the urge to succeed and be drawn along similar paths.

The phrase "socialism with Chinese characteristics," used by Deng Xiaoping to describe the nature of the political-economic system that China



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is striving to achieve through its reform and modernization program, is perhaps purposely vague. Its economic implication is a system lying somewhere between the extremes of a totally centrally planned economy and one governed solely by free enterprise and market forces. The growing diversity of economic systems throughout the world has decreased the utility of labels such as communism, socialism, and capitalism in describing the true nature of a given national economy. All "free enterprise" economies in East Asia, and indeed throughout the world, fall somewhere on the spectrum between central planning and free markets. Japan and the other nations of East Asia, given the greater participation of government institutions in directing their economies, are situated more toward the central planning pole than the United States or most European economies. With its ambitious goals of modernization and its aspirations to great power status, China under "socialism with Chinese characteristics" will gradually come to more closely resemble the other East Asian nations.

Besides uncertainty in China, other potential barriers to closer economic integration in Northeast Asia exist. The economic relationship between Japan and South Korea, for example, often takes on acrimonious aspects. Despite Japanese elder statesman (former foreign minister and noted economist) Saburo Okita's belief that the two countries have a "strong community of interest in the development of each other's economies," most South Koreans perceive a more one-sided relationship. A commonly expressed

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grievance is the belief that Japan has deprived Korea of around \$25 billion in foreign exchange earnings over the past twenty years because of the considerable trade imbalance in favor of Japan. Most of the yearly trade imbalance is a result of Korea's import of capital goods, which Koreans say could be redressed if Japanese government and industry were more forthcoming in sharing technology with and invested more generously in Korean industry. The argument even touches the national security area when Koreans claim that the Japanese owe them a great deal more generosity because of Korea's heavy defense spending that, in addition to preserving South Korea's own integrity, also provides a defense "shield" for Japan.<sup>22</sup>

Similar strains have already begun to appear in the budding Chinese-Japanese trade relationship. Concerned over the \$5.9 billion trade deficit with Japan in 1985 (most of the early 1980s showed a slight yearly surplus or small deficit for China), China has become somewhat disillusioned over both the level of Japanese investment and Japanese unwillingness to share the technology that China needs to develop its own industries.<sup>23</sup> Like the South Koreans, the Chinese also feel that Japan should be considerably more generous in providing developmental assistance in the form of freer technology transfers, investment in Chinese industry unfettered by the requirement for a strictly equivalent reciprocal benefit to Japan, and outright aid.

Another potential barrier to increased Northeast Asian economic cooperation is the recent improvement in Sino-Soviet relations and its

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potential for channeling more of China's trade to the Soviet Union. To illustrate, China's trade with the Soviet Union rose from \$363 million in 1982 to \$2.1 billion in 1986, a nearly six-fold increase.<sup>21</sup> In addition to this growing trade with the Soviet Union, China has also tried to increase its economic ties to Eastern Europe. These trends, coupled with conservative backlash against economic reforms, could result in China's return to a more centrally planned economy with greater affinity to the Soviet model.

On the whole, however, rapid modernization—a goal of both reformers and conservatives, though methods may differ—is not going to be achieved through increased trade with the Soviets at the expense of Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Western Europe. Furthermore, some of the East European countries, Hungary being the primary example, have themselves instituted reforms similar to those undertaken by China, and under Gorbachev even the Soviets have begun to flirt with economic reforms. While it is certainly beneficial in some respects for China to trade with the Soviets and East Bloc nations—particularly in areas such as refurbishing or expanding heavy industries and parts of its transportation system built during the heyday of Sino-Soviet cooperation, as well as in exchanging agricultural and low-technology consumer goods—higher-technology trade with other Northeast Asian nations and the West will be an ever-increasing requirement if the country is to achieve its modernization goals.<sup>22</sup>

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As the region moves toward the next century, the barriers to closer economic relations in the Northeast Asian triangle do not appear insurmountable. Many forces will tend to overcome such problems, strengthening and broadening Dr. Okita's "strong community of interest" to include all three national economies. As China continues to modernize and open its economy to the outside world, its trade relationship with South Korea will continue to grow, engendering competition that will pressure Japan to adjust its trade policies with both countries, in turn stimulating further integration of the three economies. Another impetus for such ties will be the need for Japan, South Korea, and, increasingly, China to find export outlets other than the saturated US market through which to sustain their internal growth.

Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry has recognized that Japan can no longer make maximum self-sufficiency the goal of national economic policy. Instead, a "horizontal division of labor" with neighboring Asian states will be necessary to counter the destabilizing effects on the international economy of large trade surpluses.<sup>26</sup> While Japan has been threatened by the potential "boomerang" effects of its large surpluses for quite some time, South Korea's growing success in following the Japanese model has made such considerations more important in its own economic calculations. And China's continued growth and modernization will certainly lead its leadership to recognize the seriousness of the problem. Reaching such a horizontal division of labor, for both intra- and extra-regional trade,

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will lead to significant economic cooperation in the form of coordinating domestic macro-economic policies as well as industrial and trade policies.

Similar economic calculations, in part, drove West European nations into the formation of the European Economic Community. Thus, as the 21st century approaches, the geographical proximity of the Northeast Asian triangle countries, the dynamism (potential in the case of China) and complementarity of their economies, and the pressure of outside economic forces will most likely lead to growing economic interdependence and integration.

#### COMMON POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS

Economic activity, of course, does not occur in a political vacuum. In surmising that rising economic success in Asian-Pacific nations has often surpassed the rate of political development, Richard Holbrooke, former assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, has formulated a key question: Is economic achievement alone sufficient to ensure a nation's successful future, or must political maturity accompany economic endeavor to carry a country to a higher "plateau" of development, where economic accomplishments are institutionalized through the country's political system? Holbrooke states that a country is clearly on the path to political maturity when two conditions are prevalent: first, when an expanding portion of the citizenry is participating in determining the country's leadership and

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political destiny; second, when an orderly system exists for changing leaders after a clearly specified term of office.<sup>27</sup> Such considerations are certainly pertinent to China and South Korea, and even in Japan's relatively mature parliamentary democracy, they are applicable, if in a more subtle context. Internal political development in the three countries of the Northeast Asian triangle will profoundly affect their relations with each other and the rest of the world in the coming century.

Although different ideologies currently undergird the popular legitimacy of their respective governments, both China and South Korea are striving for political maturity as defined by Holbrooke. Since the turmoil of the closing days of World War II and the early postwar years, authoritarian rule has been the norm for both countries. In China, only two leaders—Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping—exercised autocratic rule for most of the period since the communist victory in 1949. Similarly, South Korea has been tightly controlled by three autocratic rulers—Syngman Rhee, Park Chung Hee, and Chun Doo Hwan (the last two being former army generals)—except for short interludes. Recently, however, both the political elites and general populace in each country, though through different methods and to different degrees, are seeking greater pluralism in the political process and an institutionalized method of changing leaders. South Korea took a step in this direction with the direct election of a new president, Roh Tae Woo, who took office in February 1988.

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Looking first at South Korea, the unmistakable impression is that the country is on the verge of achieving political maturity as defined by E. H. Brooke. Since the early 1960s, the governments of Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan staked their legitimacy and justified their authoritarian methods on two grounds: the need for a strong response to the threat of North Korean attack or internal subversion of the South, and the need to provide firm direction to the essentially market-oriented South Korean economy to ensure continued improvement in living standards. As a result, South Korea's rulers, backed strongly by the country's armed forces from whence they and their chief ministers traced their origins, felt justified in placing the democratic aspirations of the populace in abeyance, treating them as a luxury to be enjoyed only when the South is completely secure from the North Korean threat and has achieved adequate economic progress. The majority of the populace, moreover, was generally willing to accept authoritarian rule and the order it provided to society, as long as they perceived an improvement of their economic lot and movement toward a better life for themselves and their children.<sup>28</sup>

As the country has made major strides in recent years toward achieving the twin goals of security against the North and economic progress, this basic consensus among the ruling elite, the armed forces, and the populace has come under growing stress. Having achieved what much of the rest of the world views as miraculous economic progress, raising per capita GNP from below \$100

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in 1960 to \$4,000 in 1989, the country has witnessed the emergence of a large and relatively affluent middle class.<sup>29</sup> With their future economic well-being secured, and with the improved education and knowledge of the outside world that accompanies rising affluence, ordinary South Koreans became increasingly dissatisfied with military rule. Though their understanding of democracy was as yet incomplete, they longed for a truly legitimate government that both reflected their own aspirations and enhanced the country's international reputation.<sup>30</sup>

The South Korean government under Chun Doo Hwan was not immune to the influences working on the populace at large. Chun himself showed numerous signs that he was more than a mere military dictator. With a strong sense of history and deep concern for his place in it, Chun markedly departed from the paths followed by his predecessors, striving in his own way to achieve a fully legitimate South Korean government. In contrast to Park Chung Hee, who installed himself as president for life, Chun clearly indicated, early on, his intention to serve only one term and had this goal included in his new constitution.<sup>31</sup> Equally significant, Chun was loathe, particularly as the nation approached the 1988 Olympics and its symbolic joining of the world community, to declare martial law and use the military to quell internal political disturbances challenging his rule.<sup>32</sup>

To a limited degree, and often because of external pressure, particularly from the United States, Chun also allowed opposition leaders such



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as the "two Kims" (Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam), formerly imprisoned or in exile, to regain their freedom and gradually increase their political activity. Chun further agreed to begin a "dialogue" with the opposition regarding the method of electing future presidents. All of these actions demonstrated a clear trend on the part of the South Korean government toward accepting increased political diversity within society, toward achieving an increasingly democratic political system, and toward fully institutionalizing and legitimizing the country's means of leadership succession. The presidential election in December 1987 and legislative elections in April 1988 suggest these goals are at least within near reach.

Thus, the desire for achieving a higher level of political maturity spans all segments of Korean society, with little disagreement among these segments on the overall direction the political future of the country should take. Until the events of the spring and summer of 1987, however, broad disagreement remained over the pace of political change and the exact type of democratic government the country should have when it reached political maturity. Stressing gradual reform, the government and ruling party favored indirect elections for Chun's successor, under the existing electoral college system, prior to the end of his term in February 1988, followed by eventual establishment of a parliamentary democracy with a strong prime minister and ceremonial president, both elected by the national parliamentary body. The opposition, on the other hand, fearful of ruling party control over the electoral college,

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wanted direct popular elections for Chun's successor with the permanent establishment of a presidential system of democracy based on direct election.<sup>33</sup> The heart of the issue was popular discontent concerning the primacy of military influence over the government—the cabinet and ruling party membership of the National Assembly being dominated by a large number of former military officers<sup>34</sup>—and its continuation after Chun stepped down. With neither side willing to compromise, Chun in April 1987 suspended debate on the issue, to postpone resolution until after the 1988 Olympics.

Compounding the popular disenchantment provoked by Chun's suspension of the constitutional reform debate, the ruling party subsequently nominated Roh Tae Woo, another former army general and military academy classmate of Chun's, who had played a prominent role in the military coup that brought Chun to power, as his successor. The massive popular demonstrations that ensued, initiated by students but also clearly supported by middle-class Koreans, placed Chun in the position of having to either declare martial law and employ military force to quell the demonstrations or accede to the opposition demands. Showing the government's concern over the potential damage that continued internal disorder could cause to the country's ambitious plans for 1988 and beyond, Roh Tae Woo himself played the primary role in effecting Chun's eventual acquiescence to the principle of direct elections and agreement to draft a new constitution with the opposition, based on this principle. Having

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thus agreed to institute democratic reform at an early date, the South Korean government and people took major strides toward resolving the issues of the pace and final form of democratic reform.

Difficult obstacles yet block the path to full political maturity in South Korea. A new constitution incorporating the government concessions was written and approved by the opposition and people in time for the presidential elections to be held before the end of 1987, but years of mistrust cannot be erased overnight. This difficult task is complicated by the absence of a democratic tradition in South Korea. Even the opposition parties, the focus of much outside attention to the country's struggle for democracy, have a strongly authoritarian tradition themselves, with the two Kims often appearing as ambitious and uncompromising as Chun himself, blocking the rise of younger men and struggling with each other for control of the opposition.<sup>55</sup> Their split, dividing the opposition vote, was viewed as a major factor in Roh Tae Woo's election victory.

The South Korean military is another source of uncertainty, despite its efforts in recent years to stay out of politics. Twice before, including during Chun's seizure of power, it intervened when the country was attempting to establish a democratic leadership succession, and it still contains among its senior generals and colonels an "elite within an elite" who planned on moving into key government positions as did many of their predecessors.<sup>56</sup> Finally, there are the student demonstrators, whose frequently anti-capitalist

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and often anti-American extremism in the past was generally either ignored or looked on as a nuisance by the middle class; how the students will react to government (and opposition) actions in the future still is an open question.<sup>37</sup> Each of these factors poses a threat to continued democratic evolution in South Korea. Their potential seriousness is magnified when added to another intangible factor pointed out by former US ambassador to South Korea William Gleysteen: the general feeling throughout a society that sees right and wrong in stark terms and that admires strength and boldness, that to compromise connotes weakness.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the future of South Korean democracy is by no means secure.

Many other factors, however, lead to an optimistic assessment of South Korea's ability to achieve political maturity as defined by Holbrooke. The actions of the Chun government, seemingly out of character with its authoritarian nature and military origins, in acceding to what it perceived as the overwhelming popular will apparently went far in creating an atmosphere for compromise. In fact, the ruling party cannot but have enhanced its stature, and certainly that of Roh Tae Woo, through its actions. Agreement on a new constitution represented a major step toward more democratic government. The climate for compromise is further strengthened by the general consensus throughout Korean society on the goals of becoming an economically advanced nation and joining the community of nations as a full member of international society. One can feel more or less confident, therefore, in the expectation that the problems will be resolved, that along

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with the symbolic joining of the community of nations represented by such events as the 1985 World Bank meeting in Seoul, the 1986 Asian Games, and the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the country will emerge as a more self-confident, truly democratic society.

In China, Deng Xiaoping's attempts to institutionalize his economic reform policies have already been mentioned. Working for the reforms to succeed and for the opening to the outside world to continue unabated, Deng recognized the necessity, to ensure both internal stability and external confidence, for China to avoid the turmoil engendered by power struggles and radical policy shifts during his gradual succession to Mao. To this end, he attempted to put into place not just a second echelon of leaders immediately below him, sympathetic to his goals and policies, but a third echelon below that as well, to provide the generational bridge necessary to continue the reforms into the next century.<sup>39</sup>

Such efforts quit far short of providing a truly institutionalized means of choosing his successor, especially one allowing greater public participation in the process such as is being pursued in South Korea. But by broadly basing his associates and proteges throughout the system, Deng hoped to lessen the influence of personality cults and party and government factionalism in choosing his successor. Of course, conservative backlash against his reform policies (a clear manifestation of the factionalism he wanted to avoid) threw into doubt those efforts to provide for a smooth succession. Nonetheless, Deng's goal reflected a

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growing desire among segments of both the leadership and the general populace to provide for a legitimate means of succession that will prevent the internal convulsions and consequent uncertainty of past leadership changes.

Some segments of the Chinese populace are visibly expressing their longing for increased pluralism in Chinese society and a greater public voice in determining the leadership and political destiny of the country. Though exhibiting a force and scale much lower than demonstrations in South Korea obtained, the late 1986 to early 1987 student demonstrations in China were no less significant, especially in the context of the even more controlled and authoritarian communist system in China. Beginning in early December in a single city, ostensibly over student dissatisfaction with campus living conditions, the demonstrations quickly spread throughout the country, taking on ideological and political overtones. Demonstrations at campuses in 19 cities culminated in a large demonstration in Beijing where several thousand students and supporters, despite an official government ban, shouted slogans and carried banners supporting democracy, press freedom, and reform. The extent of the feelings expressed is vividly characterized by translations from wall posters seen during the Beijing demonstration:

Dictatorship by one party has monopolized the entire legislative, judicial, executive, foreign policy, military and propaganda machinery of the country.

If the supreme power of the party cannot be peacefully and legally checked and balanced by

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another group, then democracy can be no more than a blank sheet of paper.

If the party and government are not separated, then the excessively slow development of the national strength and the economy will eternally hinder the prosperity of our country.<sup>10</sup>

The subsequent firm reaction of the government, including the dismissal from teaching positions and party expulsion of several liberal academic and party officials believed to have inspired the students, was a pale foreshadowing of the government's reaction, under new leadership, to the massive student demonstrations of 1989. These demonstrations appear to be the culminating event that has allowed conservatives within the party and government to reassert their authority, jeopardizing, for now, much of what hope remained for the success of Deng Xiaoping's reforms.

Nonetheless, the students of China's universities are the elite of society, those who must lead China in the coming century if it is to modernize and achieve its goals of greater international prestige and power. The feelings they have expressed, though they may not yet fully understand the ideas and concepts behind them, are bound to surface again in the future. The party leadership, moreover, reacted most strongly when evidence surfaced that workers—the segment of society that will become China's equivalent of a middle class as modernization progresses—were joining some of the demonstrations.<sup>11</sup>

Once again, though the overall political situations in the two countries yet remain vastly different, in looking toward the future it is difficult

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to resist drawing parallels with South Korea's middle class and the essential role they have played in the unprecedented political changes there. The key unanswered questions are, How widespread are such feelings among the general populace in China? and, Can China peacefully and inexorably move toward greater political pluralism and an institutionalized means of leadership succession—toward political maturity—in such a manner as to fulfill popular yearnings and expectations while forestalling tumultuous upheaval?

While South Korea and China continue to strive for political maturity, Japan's postwar constitution establishing a parliamentary democracy has enabled that country to achieve the twin goals of widespread participation in the political process and a set, orderly procedure for changing leadership. Yet it is misleading to classify Japan as a democracy in the Western sense, and there may be a higher plane of political maturity beyond that postulated by Holbrooke—one involving *external* political maturity in the international community as a whole—that Japan has yet to achieve.

Japan's feudalistic heritage, where for centuries power was shared and balanced among several semi-autonomous fiefdoms, continues to influence Japanese statecraft and government decisionmaking down to the present. On the surface, with its parliament and government ministries presided over by a cabinet and prime minister, the Japanese government appears to contain the hierarchical machinery necessary for decisive direction of the country. In reality, the situation is quite different, with the institutions of



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government resembling not a single pyramid but, instead, several pyramids, each a separate hierarchy more or less equal in size and influence, with much overlap in their functions and areas of influence.

Each ministry, for example, is a hierarchically organized career organization, completely staffed by its own bureaucrats except for the minister himself and a parliamentary vice minister equivalent in rank to the top bureaucrat or administrative vice minister. Along with the ministries, which are structured in an informal pecking order, other more or less coequal power centers include parliament, the prime minister, and various political cliques and clusters of industrialists. Though the analogy is not exact, these various power centers share power and authority in the modern Japanese government in a manner similar to the way it was shared among separate fiefdoms in Japan's feudal past.

Of course, with the growth of large government bureaucracies in virtually all modern industrialized democracies worldwide, such sharing of power is present to some degree in virtually all modern states. But in most of these countries, the chief executive still retains a significant amount of centralized power and authority, whether by tradition, political appointments that extend several levels down into government departments and ministries, or other means. This is not the case in Japan, with the result that the Japanese prime minister has less real power than the head of government in any Western democracy.<sup>12</sup>

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For the overall Japanese system, this decentralization means that effective decisions regarding controversial issues are extremely difficult to come by. The most obvious recent evidence of this is Japan's unwillingness to change its policy of unlimited industrial expansion based on exports, despite the fact that spectacular trade surpluses with the United States, Western Europe, and now even South Korea and China are producing increasingly hostile reactions to Japan's seemingly unabated self-interest. The result could eventually be a full-scale protectionist response that could destroy the very foundations of Japan's postwar prosperity and, consequently, the legitimacy of its governmental system.

China and South Korea, with the memories of the World War II "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" yet vivid, are particularly skeptical of Japan's ability to change what they view as essentially self-aggrandizing economic policies. Thus, despite an average yearly increase of 10 percent in the foreign aid, or Official Development Assistance (ODA), portion of Japan's national budget between 1981 and 1985,<sup>13</sup> at a time when all other budget categories except defense either declined or stayed the same, they, along with most other Asian nations, remain doubtful of Japan's true motives. In contrast to US aid policy, designed to assist other nations in attaining the indigenous economic, social, political and military conditions that will maximize their contribution to the overall strategic position of the free world, Japanese ODA, many observers believe, has been primarily prompted by economic motives, designed to

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provide a long-term benefit to Japanese business by building export markets.<sup>11</sup>

South Korea's strong perception of Japanese self-interest was evident in that country's 1981 demand for a \$10 billion aid package from Japan, which the South Korean government characterized as recompense for South Korea's contribution to Japan's security through its own high level of defense spending to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The countries eventually settled on \$1 billion in 1983, and Prime Minister Nakasone travelled to Seoul as the first postwar Japanese prime minister to visit South Korea.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, with its large trade deficit with Japan and the low level of Japanese investment and technology transfer, China's leaders also strongly perceive that self-interest, particularly the promotion of Japanese business advantages, is the primary goal of Japan's economic relationship with China.

Self-interest certainly must guide the policies of all sovereign nations to a significant degree. The rapid postwar growth of global economic interdependence, however, has blurred the line between self-interest and the interests of all. The United States recognized this condition at the end of World War II with its Marshall Plan for Europe and aid to Japan. By so recognizing that its security and prosperity were inseparable from the welfare of its friends and allies, the United States perhaps reached a higher level of political maturity than that brought about solely by its internal democratic processes.

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Having achieved Holbrooke's two conditions, the United States extended the concept of political maturity externally to the entire community of nations. It recognized that its economic future was intertwined with that of Europe and Japan, and that the continued viability of its own democratic system depended upon the existence of a strong bloc of prosperous and stable countries that would allow the values of freedom and democracy to grow and flourish throughout the world. Many would argue that the United States has since retreated from this high plateau of political maturity, but few would disagree that Japan, with its growing economic power and its recent surpassing of the United States as the world's largest oversea investor, is in a perfect position to strive for this higher level through increased and more unselfish economic aid in Asia and throughout the world.

Signs indicate that Japan is indeed moving in this direction. Japanese ODA steadily increased, both in absolute amount and percentage of GNP, from \$1.1 billion (0.2 percent of GNP) in 1976 to \$4.32 billion (0.35 percent of GNP) in 1984.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, since 1981, when the Japanese government instituted a program to reduce government expenditures and large budget deficits, ODA and defense spending have been the only areas of the overall Japanese national budget to experience an annual percentage increase. Despite this policy, however, Japanese aid levels as a percentage of GNP remain well below that of other economically advanced nations (also a frequent criticism of the United States, even though it is by far the world's largest aid giver in absolute terms), placing Japan

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in twelfth place as an aid giver in 1983,<sup>17</sup> even though it had the second largest GNP among the same group of nations.

Muting such criticism over Japan's aid levels as well as its perennial trade surpluses, Prime Minister Nakasone in the spring of 1987 announced Japan's intention to recycle over the next three years \$30 billion of its immense trade surplus, estimated to continue at \$60–80 billion into the early 1990s, as aid to developing countries in Asia and throughout the world. Of no small significance, the entire \$30 billion is "untied," meaning that the aid, to be cycled through the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other international development institutions, is not contingent upon the receiving country using it to purchase services or products from Japanese business. Though other areas of the world will receive large portions of this aid as well, Asia has in the past received the majority of Japan's ODA (67.8 percent in 1985), with China the top recipient (14.4–16 percent) since 1982.<sup>18</sup>

Japan has been accused in the past of announcing such programs with great fanfare and enthusiasm to deflect international criticism, while the substance in actual execution has turned out to be much less. But if the country can carry through this program and institute others of equal magnanimity, Japan will take major strides both toward achieving the external political maturity necessary to ensure the survival of the free world economy, and toward playing a much greater role in bringing about closer economic and political integration in Northeast Asia.

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The three nations of the Northeast Asian triangle, then, are all striving for political maturity in their own ways and with their own timetables. The search for political maturity, of course, cannot be separated from the desire for economic growth and stability; a symbiotic relationship exists between the two. Though form may differ in each of the three countries, underlying aspirations are similar, and common individual goals cannot help but bring about a growing community of interest as the region moves into the next century. Japan, with its relative stability, must, in its search for an international role commensurate with its economic power, play a key role. With unselfish and far-sighted policies clearly recognizing that the security of Japan's future depends on the ability of China and South Korea to achieve their goals, Japan could indeed assume a role very similar to that played by the United States at the close of World War II. Such action would help overcome the social and cultural baggage, deposited by the historical legacy of Northeast Asian relations, that inhibits further cooperation and integration within the triangle.

#### *THE SOCIAL DIMENSION*

Will the coming of the next century, already touted by many expert observers as the "Pacific Century," bring about a dissolution of the fears, hatreds, and jealousies that have characterized relations among Japan, China, and Korea for centuries past? Some hopeful visions present themselves. In the 1986 Asian Games held in Seoul, a

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precursor to the 1988 Olympics, South Korean, Chinese, and Japanese athletes competed with each other and ceremoniously marched together. Unmistakably paralleling Japan in its 1964 hosting of the Olympics, South Korea's athletes successfully competing in their individual and team events in the Asian Games, and later in the Olympics, with their country hosting both competitions, forced the image of an advanced modern state ready to take its rightful place in the community of nations.<sup>19</sup> When one recalls, however, that it was "ping-pong diplomacy" that led the way to normalized US-Chinese relations after decades of mutual acrimony, the images of peaceful competition among China, Japan, and South Korea have regional implications extending far beyond the achievements of a single nation. Indeed, the three countries took the top three spots in both total medals and gold medals accumulated in the Asian Games, symbolic, perhaps, of their potential combined leadership role in Asia's future.

On the other side of the ledger, despite the common influences in their cultural heritage, and their obvious physical similarities in most Western eyes, Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans are much less prone than Europeans to recognize their common historical roots and develop a distinct sense of regional cultural and social solidarity. This lack of shared feeling is clearly reflected in their unwillingness to acknowledge cultural debts to one another, as all three nations tend to exaggerate the originality of their own cultures in the face of incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. It was also demonstrated in the Asian Games through

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the intensity of competition among the three countries, particularly South Korea and Japan, where the South Koreans believe they have assuaged their national honor by defeating Japan in certain key events.<sup>70</sup>

Which direction, then, will social and cultural relations among the triangle nations take in the future? For the greater part of the postwar era, the rate of improvement has been glacial. Korea and Taiwan, for example, were both victims of prewar Japanese colonialism, but in contrast to the swiftness with which Japan signed a peace treaty with the Nationalist Chinese government of Chiang Kai-Shek on Taiwan in 1952, South Korea and Japan did not reach an agreement on a peace treaty until 1965, fourteen years after discussions began in 1951.<sup>71</sup> The process of improving relations between Japan and China has proceeded even more slowly. The 1978 Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship was not signed until Sino-US rapprochement in the early 1970s paved the way. Of course, no agreement formally ending the Korean War and establishing normal relations between South Korea and China has yet been consummated, and it was not until the early 1980s that the two countries allowed any direct contact between each other's citizens.

The process of improving relations, however, has greatly accelerated since these initial milestones, possibly harbingers of a more felicitous future, were achieved. Japan and China have exchanged numerous visits of government leaders at the highest levels since the first postwar Japanese prime minister visited China in 1972.



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leading to numerous economic and cultural agreements between the two countries. Japan-South Korea relations floundered for another fifteen years after the signing of the 1965 peace treaty, but Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone, the first prime minister to officially visit Seoul, traveled to South Korea in 1983, two months after taking office and, significantly, before visiting the United States, the traditional first foreign visit of a new Japanese leader. The important symbolism of this gesture in attempting to dispel the past negativism on both sides paved the way for South Korean president Chun Doo Hwan to visit Tokyo in 1984 and meet with Emperor Hirohito, sovereign through much of Japan's 20th-century colonialism and World War II. This meeting was even more pregnant with symbolism, representing a compromise between the national pride of the two dynamic and intensely nationalistic countries.<sup>52</sup> To maintain the momentum of these efforts, the two countries have agreed to establish a "Forum for the 21st Century," composed of civilian and government delegates from both countries and empowered to make recommendations to both governments on expediting the improvement of bilateral diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties.<sup>53</sup>

The initial steps by South Korea and China to improve and expand their relations, though tentative in comparison, are no less significant to Northeast Asian peace, cooperation, and security. China specialist Jonathan Pollack has identified dramatic departures from past Chinese policy toward South Korea in six areas:<sup>54</sup>

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1. China's willingness to engage in contacts with officials and citizens from South Korea in varied athletic, scientific, and economic contexts.
2. The growing unofficial trade relationships.
3. Improvements in Chinese-South Korean relations at North Korea's expense without any discernible improvement in North Korean-US relations at Seoul's expense.
4. China's explicit disapproval of North Korean terrorist acts against the South, such as the Rangoon bombing.
5. China's continuing pressure on the North to soften its rigid stance and accede to a more incremental approach to North-South reunification.
6. China's willingness to cooperate with the United States and Japan in reducing tensions on the peninsula.

A vivid example of the last two areas is recent Chinese advocacy of a four-party cross-recognition plan that would allow China to open diplomatic relations with South Korea, while the United States, presumably followed by Japan and other Western countries, recognizes North Korea.<sup>55</sup> South Korea, moreover, has succeeded in enlisting general Japanese support for this concept through a recent foreign ministerial agreement in which Japan pledged to make no hasty move in recognizing North Korea and to support joint entry of the North and South into the United Nations.<sup>56</sup>

Despite such efforts among the three nations, the specter of less cooperative relations in the past

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continues to haunt attempts at further progress. Perhaps the most telling recent manifestation of this problem is the Japanese textbook issue, which first surfaced in 1982 when the Japanese Ministry of Education revised certain history texts to reflect a less aggressive image of Japan in its past relations with China and Korea. Words such as *invasion*, used to describe events such as Japan's colonial incursions into China in the 1930s and, further back, Hideyoshi's campaign on the Korean Peninsula in the early 1600s, were changed to more euphemistic, less strident terms. Both the Chinese and South Korean governments, accusing Tokyo of trying to minimize Japanese atrocities and aggression, immediately protested at the government level, demanding that Japan rescind the changes. All parties eventually reached a compromise on this issue through which Japan would revise the texts again in 1985 to reflect Chinese and Korean concerns.<sup>57</sup>

That strong feelings continue to exist on both sides, however, was evident again in 1986 when China and South Korea questioned Japan's sincerity in making the revisions. The Japanese education minister, who attempted to justify the toning down of Japanese atrocities, even suggesting in the case of Korea that it deserved to be colonized because of its weakness, was eventually fired.<sup>58</sup> Another manifestation of the same problem occurs when Japanese government officials visit the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, a Shinto memorial where the souls of Japanese war dead—including those convicted of war crimes—are believed to be interred. As part of his "closing of

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postwar accounts," Prime Minister Nakasone advocated allowing such visits by himself and others within the government in an official rather than personal capacity, thereby seeming to erase the stigma of wrongdoing from those who were convicted of leading Japan to colonization of Korea and invasion of China. This issue is sensitive in Japanese domestic politics as well, but whenever it surfaces, it provokes particularly strong Chinese and Korean reactions, similar to those engendered by the textbook controversy.

The social and cultural animosity evident in these issues is particularly strong between Japan and Korea. Former US ambassador to Japan and renowned Japan scholar Edwin O. Reischauer has pointed out that, of the foreign countries toward which the Japanese have their most fully developed popular attitudes—the United States, China, the Soviet Union, and Korea—Korea and its people rank near the bottom in terms of feelings of closeness and warmth between the two peoples, despite the fact that Korean language, underlying cultural traits, and modern institutions make it the country most like Japan. Most Japanese view both North and South Korea as backward nations once ruled by Japan, and the Korean minority living in Japan as inferior and troublesome—feelings clearly reflected in the aforementioned textbook incident involving the Japanese education minister. Reischauer also points out that such feelings are mirrored in Korea, where feelings of hatred for Japan are institutionalized in the Korean education system, ensuring that the resentment against the Japanese is passed on to

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new generations. Yet Koreans pay Japan the ultimate compliment, copying its modern economic and social institutions while striving to duplicate Japan's postwar development record.<sup>59</sup> A fiercely competitive attitude has resulted, with most Koreans making no secret of their desire to "out-Japanese" the Japanese.

Feelings between the Chinese and Japanese are more complex. On the one hand, the Japanese admire and feel closeness with China, and have no compunction against acknowledging their cultural debt to the Chinese—contrasting markedly with their unwillingness to admit hardly any positive influences from Korea. Such feelings have made it possible for the Japanese to feel a strong sense of war guilt toward China and to consciously attempt to make amends. In addition, the tremendous size of China produces a fascination with the country among the Japanese, and throughout the world, as well as the recognition that China can play a major role again, not just in Asia, but globally.

On the other hand, balancing these feelings of kinship and respect, the Chinese have been reluctant to reciprocate, viewing the Japanese with distrust and a large measure of contempt.<sup>60</sup> The Japanese culture, despite its veneer of Chinese values, is often considered by the Chinese to be more barbaric and materialistic, lacking in true perspective on the higher plane of spiritual development.

Among China, Japan, and South Korea, deep-seated social and cultural barriers certainly exist. But the changing economic and political environment in Northeast Asia is leading to their

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gradual dismantling. The attitudes developed through centuries of autocratic rule cannot help but broaden as societies become more pluralistic and open. As this in turn leads to increased economic ties and resultant contacts among the people of the three nations, realization that their futures are no longer separate but instead becoming more and more interdependent will further soften harsh attitudes and beliefs of the past. Finally, these processes will be accompanied by growing generational distance from the events and memories of World War II and the Korean War, distance that will help erase persistent stigmas and further accentuate cultural affinities of the past and common destinies of the future.

In taking a holistic view of the regional economic, political, and social scene, then, what can be said about future integration within the Northeast Asian triangle as it moves into the "century of the Pacific?" Certainly, there are many uncertainties and problems, some deeply rooted in the historical legacy, some stemming from modern-day political, economic, and social affairs. China will continue to seek its independent path to becoming the central power in Asia and a more powerful player on the global stage. Japan will continue its extra-regional identification as one of the advanced "Western" nations. Korea will continue to focus inward on problems on the peninsula and on its own attempts to follow Japan into becoming a "Western" economic power in its own right. And there is always the potential among countries with high aspirations and strongly nationalistic outlooks for serious clashes and disagreements.

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Yet forces that would foster increased cohesion also exist, some historically unprecedented in their scope and scale. Among these one must number growing global economic interdependence and recognition of the failure of communist ideology and centralized state control to produce promised economic and social progress. Such forces are bound to lead Japan, China, and South Korea to shed much of their self-centered historical, ideological, and nationalistic baggage and rediscover that their national destinies are intertwined, as they were during the Tang, Silla, and Nara dynasties. Indeed, stable and growing relations—economic, political, and social—with one another will increasingly affect their ability to achieve their individual national goals and play their *desired roles in the international community*.

The search for national destiny and human fulfillment in each country of the triangle will therefore produce a trend toward more cooperation and, hence, increased integration in Northeast Asia. That such a trend will lead to an economic and political union similar to NATO is certainly highly unlikely into the foreseeable future. Yet, as in Western Europe, closer integration will significantly affect US relations with the region and have a large bearing on the outcome of the strategic competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in an area of growing importance and rivalry.

Having returned once again to the security dimension, it is time now to explore the effect the two major threats to regional peace and security—the Soviet Union and North Korea—will have on

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the trend toward greater economic, political, and social integration among nations of the Northeast Asian triangle.



## Four

### SECURITY THREAT AND RESPONSE

*In a European painting every detail is filled in and very little is left to the imagination. In a Japanese painting the empty spaces define the design; perception is therefore decisive.*

—Yasuhiro Nakasone  
Former Japanese Prime Minister

The two primary conditions that have led to the strength and durability of the NATO security alliance in Europe are a strong community of economic, political, and cultural interests, and a strong fear of the expansion of the Soviet empire into Western Europe. Indeed, it is when perceptions of these two conditions begin to vary significantly among member nations that the greatest strains are placed upon the long-standing

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alliance. As we have seen, economic, political, and social affinities among nations of the Northeast Asian triangle at the same level of intensity as those in NATO Europe are thus far absent from the Northeast Asian scene, though the trends lead unmistakably toward much stronger ties in the future.

To gain a complete picture of future security relationships in the region, our focus must now turn to the other major condition outlined above: the fear of Soviet expansionism and its effect on Northeast Asian nations. Once again, an unmistakable trend appears, one of movement toward "hardening" the soft regionalism that currently characterizes relations among China, Japan, and South Korea. A logical starting point in this analysis is an examination of the Soviet threat in Northeast Asia and its likely future direction.

#### *THE SOVIET THREAT*

The close of the 19th century witnessed the beginnings of the modern Soviet threat to Northeast Asia in the form of Russian imperial designs on Manchuria and Korea, which were eventually thwarted by Japan's own imperialist ambitions. Replacement of the tsars with communist dictators did little to temper the Russian appetite for Northeast Asian territory. Besides occupation of the northern half of the Korean Peninsula at the close of World War II, the Soviets attempted to gain a direct military foothold on the Japanese mainland, proposing a Soviet occupation force for the northern half of Hokkaido. The United States

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successfully rebuffed this attempt but, because of a misunderstanding between President Roosevelt and his advisors at the Cairo conference, leading the president to believe that historical precedent favored the Soviets, agreed to cede control of the four islands off northern Hokkaido (which Japan refers to as its "Northern Territories") to the Soviet Union at Japan's expense.<sup>1</sup>

With the 1949 communist victory in China and subsequent alliance between the world's two largest communist states, the Soviets, as self-appointed leaders of the international communist movement, further hoped to achieve the historic Russian dream of securing the Far Eastern land borders through domination of China in a fashion similar to their tight postwar control of most of Eastern Europe. Not wishing their country to become a *de facto* part of the Soviet empire, the contrary aspirations of Chinese leaders Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in the late 1950s led to the Sino-Soviet split and an eventual buildup of Soviet ground and air forces on the Sino-Soviet border and in Mongolia, the preponderance of Soviet forces located within striking distance of Beijing and China's key industrial facilities in Manchuria.

Soviet desires for regional domination extended to the Korean Peninsula as well, as the Soviets sought to turn their "liberation" of North Korea from Japanese colonial rule at the end of World War II into the establishment of a subservient satellite state. The Soviets tried to establish an elaborate network of political advisors in the country, to acquire control over the North

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Korean economy and subordinate it to Soviet needs and priorities, and to "Russify" North Korea through extensive programs of cultural penetration. North Korea's strong desire for independence, coupled with its relationship with China, enabled the country to force the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1948 and to resist subsequent Soviet efforts to exert hegemony over the country through other means.<sup>2</sup>

Frustrated in its attempts to obtain territorial or political suzerainty over Northeast Asia in order to secure a buffer region on its eastern front similar to that represented by Eastern Europe in the west, the Soviets have turned increasingly to military power as a means of intimidating Northeast Asian nations and protecting and furthering their own interests. Since the split with China, the Soviets have increased their ground force strength in the Far East, Siberia, and Central Asia from 17-20 divisions (approximately 170,000 troops) in 1965 to at least 53 (approaching half a million men) today.<sup>3</sup>

Since the late 1970s the Soviet Far East military buildup has entered a new and even more ominous phase. While continuing the modernization of ground and air forces oriented against China, the Soviets have further enhanced their regional military capability in several key areas. They have significantly built up and modernized their Pacific Fleet, apparently with the long-term goal of transforming a coastal defense force, essentially limited to a sea denial mission, into a formidable offensive force, capable of sea control and power projection. In addition, they have

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deployed east of the Ural Mountains an overwhelming force of mobile medium-range ballistic missiles capable of striking targets throughout the Far East, and they have added modern tactical and strategic aircraft of increasing range and sophistication to the Far East theater.

Many of these new forces have been stationed well forward in three geostrategically crucial Far East areas: in Mongolia, in the Japanese Northern Territories, and in Vietnam at Cam Ranh Bay. The Soviets further underscored the importance to overall Soviet strategic planning of this latest phase in their Far East military buildup when, in 1978, they created a separate Far East theater command headquartered at Ulan Ude in the Siberian Military District.<sup>1</sup>

Underlying all these actions are clear military and political goals. In case of war, the buildup is designed to ensure conventional and nuclear military superiority over any potential Soviet adversary in Northeast Asia, including the United States; in peacetime, it allows the Soviet government to use political blackmail and intimidation to accomplish its hegemonic aims in the region. The numbers themselves are instructive: About 470,000 (out of a total of approximately 1.93 million) troops comprise the more than 50 divisions arrayed mainly along the Sino-Soviet border, with 41 of these divisions assigned to the Far East theater (roughly east of Lake Baikal). Approximately 2,200 aircraft (one-quarter of the 8,820 Soviet Air Force total) are stationed in the Far East, 80 percent of them late-generation bombers and fighters such as the Tu-22M, MiG-23/27, Su-24, and most

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recently, the MiG-31. The Soviet Pacific Fleet has become the largest of the four Soviet fleets, with 835 ships (total Soviet Navy strength is approximately 2,880 ships) including 140 submarines and 90 major combatants, among them modern ships such as two of the Soviets' four *Kiev*-class carriers, *Kara*-class guided missile cruisers, and *Leam Rogov*-class amphibious assault vessels and landing craft. Additionally, the Soviets' only naval infantry division is stationed with the Pacific Fleet.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the magnitude of these conventional forces, it is in the area of nuclear weapons, with their clear potential for both political and military intimidation, that the Soviet Far East buildup is perhaps most striking and most worrisome to Northeast Asian nations. In addition to the one-quarter to one-third of total Soviet intercontinental and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (ICBMs and SLBMs) located in the Far East and capable of being targeted on Asian nations,<sup>6</sup> the US Defense Department estimated in 1986 that the Soviets had also deployed 162 SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) within range of Northeast Asian targets.<sup>7</sup> When added to the nuclear-capable strategic and tactical aircraft and tactical nuclear missiles, rocket launchers, and artillery pieces deployed in the Far East, it is clear that the Soviets have built a significant regional nuclear warfighting force directed solely at Asian nations and US military facilities on their territory.<sup>8</sup>

Absolute numbers, though important, are not the key point of the present analysis. Of much greater significance are (1) Soviet motives for this

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dramatic buildup and whether it will be sustained in the future; and (2) how the nations of Northeast Asia perceive the threat, both in the current environment and looking toward the future.

Regarding Soviet motives, it is important to understand that the Far East military buildup has since its inception in 1965 gone through several discrete stages during which intentions have changed and broadened. Beginning as an attempt to coerce China and enforce the Soviet view of the proper location of the Sino-Soviet border, the buildup has progressively added the additional purposes of assisting Soviet clients (such as Vietnam against China), counteracting US security cooperation with Japan, maintaining a favorable force ratio against the relatively recent possibility of Sino-US-Japanese collusion against the Soviet Union (the Washington-Tokyo-Beijing strategic triangle), and assisting in the expansion of the Soviet military presence to the south in Vietnam.<sup>9</sup>

Understanding these incremental changes in Soviet military purposes in the Far East enables one to place the military buildup into the broader context of general Soviet intentions in Asia. According to Harry Gelman, a prominent analyst of Asian military affairs, these intentions are to use overwhelming military power, adding strength where advantage already exists and compensating in advance for expected increases in the strength of adversaries, to overawe, intimidate, and divide the countries of the region, forcing acquiescence to Soviet gains and ever seeking new opportunities to advance Soviet presence and influence.<sup>10</sup> This pattern, in turn, relates the Soviet Far East military buildup to Soviet global strategic policies.

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#### *SECURITY THREAT AND RESPONSE*

Although Soviet aims in Northeast Asia are dictated by the region's unique geographical, political, and strategic features, the apparent general thrust and motivation of these aims is not unique to the Far East and is designed to link with strategic policies in other key world regions in forming overall Soviet foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

Can this general thrust be expected to continue into the next century? Or, phrased differently, what is the Soviet Union's long-term "grand strategy" for advancing its strategic geopolitical interests? For all its talk of the "correlation of forces" integrating geographic, economic, military, and political factors in determining a nation's overall power in the geopolitical arena, the Soviet Union has become essentially a one-dimensional power.<sup>12</sup> With the backdrop of a historical Russian desire to achieve a preeminent global standing, the Soviet Union under the Communist Party has tried to become the world's preeminent power in three phases: first through the logic of an assumed superior ideology, then by economic performance governed by supposedly superior economic and organizational principles stemming from its ideology, and finally, after the failure of the first two methods, through resorting to the classic means of imperial territorial expansion—overwhelming military power. In the process, according to strategic analyst Edward Luttwak, Soviet grand strategy has been transformed from one of protecting the base of ideological and economic supremacy to that of achieving military supremacy in and of itself. Economic and ideological considerations have



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thus been relegated to the roles of providing international justification and resources for the military machine.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the dynamic resulting from the failing Soviet system and popular expectations for increased living standards leads to a grim imperative for Soviet leaders: internally, they must resort to repression and militarization of society, while externally, they must magnify threats to national security in order to justify the large percentage of national resources devoted to continued building of the nation's military power. The resulting impact on Soviet foreign policy reinforces the tendency toward imperial expansion and the need for ever-widening circles of control and influence in order to produce national security.<sup>14</sup> Applied to Northeast Asia, this would seem to imply continued Soviet attempts to impose hegemony over countries in the region where possible, and where not possible, to encircle and separate them, preventing the formation of anti-Soviet coalitions and laying the foundations for future hegemony and expansion.

Mikhail Gorbachev's ascendancy to power in the Soviet Union has, at least on the surface, thrown a new factor into the self-perpetuating logic of Soviet imperialism. Recognizing the abject failure of the economic system, the almost universal cynicism among Soviet citizens regarding the efficacy of communist ideology, and the rampant careerism and corruption among party leaders and officials that results from such cynicism, Gorbachev appears to have concluded that radical changes are necessary in order to steer the country from the path of precipitous decline. Ignoring

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his predecessors' penchant for declaring the Soviet system inherently superior to all others in the face of the past two decades' overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Gorbachev has forthrightly told both the leadership and the people of the drastic reforms he sees as essential. In outlining his proposed reforms to the party leadership in the Soviet Far East city of Khabarovsk, Gorbachev stated,

The current restructuring embraces not only the economy but all other facets of public life: social relations, the political system, the spiritual and ideological and the style and the methods of the work of the party and all our cadres. "Restructuring" is a capacious word. I would equate the word "restructuring" with the word "revolution."<sup>9</sup>

In addition to this program of internal reform, Gorbachev has proposed a general lessening of international tension with Soviet adversaries, including some particularly striking initiatives relevant to Northeast Asian nations. Declaring the Soviet Union an "Asian and Pacific country," Gorbachev made significant overtures to both Beijing and Tokyo during his July 1986 speech in another Far East city, the port of Vladivostok.<sup>10</sup> Responding in part to two of the three conditions Beijing had set for improvement of Sino-Soviet relations, he announced the withdrawal of six Soviet regiments from Afghanistan and indicated Soviet intent to withdraw a "considerable number" of the 25,000 Soviet troops currently stationed in Mongolia. Beijing's third condition, conspicuously absent from Gorbachev's "concessions" to China, was cessation of Soviet

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support for Vietnam and its war for control of Kampuchea.

For the Japanese, he hinted at the possibility of a summit meeting in Tokyo between himself and the Japanese prime minister, and he dangled the prospect of significant economic opportunities through "establishing joint enterprises in the adjacent and geographically close regions of the USSR," a not-so-veiled reference to the Soviet Union's long-held desire to obtain Japanese assistance in developing its Far East regions, particularly Siberia. And for the region as a whole, Gorbachev proposed an Asian-Pacific security conference, "along the lines of the Helsinki conference," with Hiroshima as the venue, "to create an all-embracing system of international security."

In gauging the potential consequences of Gorbachev's program on the Soviet threat in Northeast Asia, two salient questions need to be answered. First, will the reforms succeed? And second, what is the ultimate intent of the reforms regarding Soviet relations with the outside world? Perhaps they are designed to radically alter the manner in which the Soviet Union deals with other nations, to include the scaling back of Soviet global ambitions. Perhaps Gorbachev merely hopes to buy time and rejuvenate the Soviet economy, making possible the creation and marshalling of additional resources to support the historical goal of world domination. Or the Soviets might want to expand their capability to compete with the West in the political and economic spheres, not just as a military power.

Whatever the purpose, many knowledgeable observers are skeptical of Gorbachev's ability to

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push through—and perhaps more importantly, of the Soviet system's ability to absorb—the Gorbachev reforms. Of three possible types of reform in the Soviet Union—policy reform through the redistribution of resources, reform of the decisionmaking process through reorganization of administrative units, and reform of the basic political-economic structures through fundamental reorientation of priorities and major shifts in the power of existing institutions—only the third can truly be called radical. Past Soviet leaders have focused on the first two methods of reform, which do not require a fundamental questioning of the viability of the basic economic and political systems.<sup>17</sup>

Despite Gorbachev's proclamation of "radical" reform and "revolution," as well as institution of some of its features in Soviet law, there is as yet little sign that he and his followers have concluded that the present system has fundamentally failed. Instead, they advocate policy and administrative palliatives, such as stronger leadership, greater worker dedication and competence, and campaigns against alcoholism and for more openness and honesty in Soviet society. Thus far, with minor exceptions, the distinction between Gorbachev and past reformers is not advocacy of radical *systemic* changes (such as those undertaken by the Chinese leadership at the outset of their modernization drive, particularly the introduction of market forces into the agricultural system), but merely the number of reforms he proposes and the frequency and forcefulness with which he advocates them.

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The historical rate of success of reforms of this type cannot be encouraging to Gorbachev. In the post-Stalin period, policy and organizational reforms have not produced major changes to the system; rather, they have generally faded with time, gradually becoming absorbed into (or overwhelmed by) existing structures, as with the Khrushchev reforms of the early 1960s. A powerful analogy is that of drugs administered to a body that has developed a tolerance—only massive doses will produce a result, and then only temporarily until the body accustoms itself to the higher levels.<sup>18</sup> Given the influence of this potent systemic, and perhaps cultural, inertia, noted Soviet-Asian scholar Donald S. Zagoria suggests that the most likely outcome is that the reforms will neither succeed nor fail, but that the Soviet system will continue to muddle on more or less in its present form.<sup>19</sup> If this scenario holds true, the Soviets will have no choice but to remain a one-dimensional superpower, with military might its only claim to “equality” with the United States. To continue demanding the requisite sacrifices from the Soviet people—continued poor living standards and lack of personal freedoms—an essentially hostile view of the outside world coupled with an expansionist, hegemonic view of Soviet “security” must continue.

Nevertheless, neither the nations of the West nor those of Northeast Asia can afford to totally discount the possibility that Gorbachev will someday succeed in forcing truly radical and fundamental reforms to the Soviet system. Perhaps after further consolidation and infusion of his power

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throughout the bureaucracy, a still relatively young Gorbachev might be able to bring about such changes. But even in looking at this possibility, one must remain prudently wary over long-term Soviet intentions. There are strong indications that Gorbachev's internal reforms and new Asian initiatives are tactical expedients designed to strengthen Soviet capabilities for achieving the long-term strategic goals of regional hegemony in Asia and overall global domination.

In his report to the 27th Party Congress in February 1986, Gorbachev discussed strategic continuity and tactical flexibility:

Continuity in foreign policy has nothing in common with the simple repetition of the past, especially as far as *approaches to accumulated problems are concerned*. . . . What is required is *firmness in defending principles and positions* coupled with *tactical flexibility*.<sup>20</sup> (emphasis added)

From statements such as these, it would appear tactical flexibility in solving such "accumulated problems" as the economy and regional anti-Soviet feeling in Northeast Asia is justified as a means for firmly pursuing and "defending" long-held strategic "principles and positions"—the eternal quest for security through global domination.

In the words of Henry Kissinger, "The purpose of . . . reform is not to spur democracy or freedom; it is to encourage efficiency and industrial progress, hence to make the Soviet Union more powerful."<sup>21</sup> Even the much ballyhooed campaign for *glasnost*, or openness, can be viewed in this light; Gorbachev may simply be using it as a political tool to expose and isolate those who might obstruct his reforms.<sup>22</sup>

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Further bolstering this theory of ultimate Soviet aims is Gorbachev's manipulation of the national security apparatus. One must be careful when ascribing the bureaucratic procrastination and ineptness of the Soviet system as a whole to the foreign policy process, in which institutions are smaller, much more centralized, and more amenable to the control of a strong leader. Gorbachev has been particularly successful in filling key national security positions with his associates and in transferring significant policymaking power to the institutions that he directly controls. The appointment of influential figures such as former ambassador to Washington Anatoly Dobrynin to key positions within the Central Committee Secretariat has effectively transferred the center of gravity of Soviet national security formulation from the Foreign Ministry to direct control under Gorbachev. In common among all Gorbachev's new appointees at the higher national security echelons is their career progression through the orthodox party and government organizations and their longstanding association with past Soviet foreign policy goals.<sup>23</sup> Since these goals have been remarkably consistent over time, it is unlikely that the Soviets will radically depart from them in the foreseeable future, though experiments with new and creative means of reaching them may be undertaken.

Perhaps recent Soviet emphasis on "defensive" strategy may be such an attempt to more creatively pursue longstanding political and military goals. In April 1987 Gorbachev announced a new basis for Soviet defense expenditures called

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"reasonable sufficiency," implying that the goal of Soviet defense spending would no longer be "parity" with opposing forces but only a level of forces sufficient to repel outside aggression.<sup>21</sup> This theme has since been echoed by numerous Soviet officials, both civilian and military. Strategic analysts and Soviet specialists have engaged in much speculation as to the real meaning of this new Soviet emphasis. Is it all smoke and mirrors, or is there real substance behind it?

Using the concept of homeland defense to justify their military actions is not new to Soviet leaders; past Soviet actions in the Far East undoubtedly do possess a defensive component. Fear of the Chinese "yellow hordes" has long motivated Russian behavior near the border with China, and the large number of Chinese troops deployed on the other side is at least partially responsible for the massive Soviet buildup. More recently, the Soviets fear the growing Chinese relationship with the United States and the Washington-Beijing-Tokyo triangle that seeks to contain the Soviets. Military forces deployed initially against the Chinese thus have taken on a new multi-purpose role in the region.

Soviet claims of defensive orientation, however, must be viewed in light of the Soviets' actual military doctrine and practice as exemplified in military writings and operational exercises. "Defense" has always meant more than simply stopping an enemy at the border. Destruction of enemy forces through offensive operations early in a conflict has long been the hallmark of Soviet military doctrine, and military "sufficiency" has



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yet to be defined precisely.<sup>25</sup> Because of this ambiguity, determining where offense ends and defense begins becomes a guessing game at best.

Given the nature of the Soviet system, or any large bureaucratic entity for that matter, one is drawn to the conclusion that public expression of this theme, as with many other of Gorbachev's initiatives, is likely indicative of intensive behind-the-scenes bureaucratic maneuvering over resource allocation. Though Gorbachev may have tightened his control over the formulation of overall foreign policy goals, struggles to control scarce resources are certain to be a continuing feature of the system. One Soviet specialist suggests that the strongest proponents of the new "defensive" concepts are civilian analysts at key institutes in Moscow; the military, on the other hand, continues to favor the old concept of "parity," which more effectively justifies the military's claim on resources. In July 1985, shortly after assuming leadership, Gorbachev met with top military leaders in Minsk and reportedly warned them not to expect large increases in the defense budget.<sup>26</sup> Even so, it may be dangerous to conclude that serious divisions exist between civilian and military leaders or that one side or the other currently holds the upper hand.

Soviet military leaders surely must recognize the need to rejuvenate the national economy if the country is to maintain its superpower status and generate additional resources for the military. Short-term differences over resource allocation, therefore, are overshadowed by common long-term goals. What is important to keep in mind is

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the distinction between publicly stated national strategy, with its supporting military doctrine, and the actual strategy and tactics a nation might employ when it goes to war. History is replete with examples of nations using "defensive" measures to justify intimidation and aggression. Until the newly stated "doctrine" shows up in Soviet operational concepts and procurement policies—something that may not be fully apparent for years or even decades—prudent observers should continue to be wary of long-term Soviet intentions.

Regardless of the success or failure of Gorbachev's reforms, the Soviets will most likely remain a threat, both globally and regionally. The Far East military buildup will almost certainly continue, though its pace may vary according to internal economic conditions and the sophistication with which the Soviets are able to manipulate the other variables in the correlation of forces equation. Western embassies in Moscow estimate that overall Soviet defense spending will remain at 18–20 percent of GNP through 1990,<sup>27</sup> and the Far East will certainly continue to get its share. Moreover, though the influence of the Soviet military and defense establishment appears to have lessened somewhat under Gorbachev, it will be important for him to secure the allegiance of these institutions as he pursues reforms. As suggested earlier, military leaders and defense industrialists apparently understand the necessity of improving the industrial base through economic reforms,<sup>28</sup> and will undoubtedly expect their support to be repaid with increased resources should positive results accrue. The proposals for Northeast Asia

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outlined in Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech, however, still indicate a changing environment in which China, Japan, and the two Koreas must view their security over both the short and long term. How, then, do each of these countries see the current and future threat, and how will they respond?

#### CHINESE WARINESS

To understand the Chinese perspective on the Soviet threat, one must begin with the basic reasons behind the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s. Although personality clashes between Chinese and Soviet leaders (Mao and Khrushchev) and ideological differences played prominent roles, a strong historical and cultural enmity between the Chinese and Russian peoples existed at an even more basic level. During the relatively short honeymoon under the guise of international communist solidarity, mutual suspicion and a general lack of admiration—dating on the Soviet side back to the Mongol conquest of southern Russia in the 13th century and on the Chinese side to later Tsarist imperial encroachments in Manchuria, Mongolia, and Turkestan—were temporarily masked.<sup>29</sup> Revived again after the death of Stalin in 1953, such feelings soon led to international competition and border conflict.

In 1963 China accused the Soviets of perpetuating unequal treaties forced upon the Chinese during the weak rule of the last imperial dynasty. These accusations eventually precipitated the Soviet troop buildup in Mongolia and on the

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Sino-Soviet common border in the mid-1960s. In 1968 the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia and declared the Brezhnev doctrine, clearly implying that they had the right to employ military force to discipline any communist state not following Moscow's dictates. Sino-Soviet border clashes began shortly thereafter in early 1969 and extended through most of the year, with China determined to show the Soviets that it would not be another Czechoslovakia.<sup>30</sup> The seriousness of these conflicts and the deep divisions between the two sides were evidenced by their resort to brinkmanship during the crisis, both apparently willing to escalate to full-scale war. The Soviets even intimated that they were prepared to use nuclear weapons if necessary.<sup>31</sup>

The immediate crisis was eventually defused, but its consequences remain significant for Northeast Asia and the world. As China sought to counterbalance the strategic threat on its northern border, it responded to the Nixon administration initiatives that led eventually to Sino-American rapprochement and the growing strategic, diplomatic, and economic relationship between China and the United States. Furthermore, with the US withdrawal from Vietnam and subsequent fall of the Saigon government, the border conflict was subsumed under the broader context of what the Chinese viewed as Soviet attempts to encircle and impose hegemony on China through its support of Vietnam, its stationing of naval and air forces at Cam Ranh Bay, its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and its close relations with India. In the mid-1970s, China stopped referring to the two

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superpowers as coequal threats to China and world peace, and began to cite Soviet "social-imperialism" and attempts to supplant the United States as "overlord in Asia" as the far more serious danger to China and the region.<sup>32</sup> Thus, after the Soviets began seriously to indicate their desire to improve Sino-Soviet relations in 1979, China eventually specified in 1982 the three obstacles mentioned earlier whose removal would be the *quid pro quo* for "normalized" relations.<sup>33</sup>

Detente between China and the Soviet Union has made some progress in the intervening years as both sides seek reduced tensions that will allow them to concentrate on internal reform and development. The level of invective and propaganda directed against the other has considerably subsided on both sides, trade between the two nations has modestly increased, and cultural ties such as student and scholar exchanges have expanded.<sup>34</sup> Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech and the appointment of an experienced, respected diplomat as ambassador in Beijing (as opposed to the Brezhnev practice of sending party veterans with little international experience, usually on their way to retirement, to fill the position) has further improved the atmosphere surrounding attempts at full rapprochement.<sup>35</sup> For China, at least one result of these trends in the short run appears to be a more sanguine view of immediate Soviet intentions and a general downplaying of the threat of an actual Soviet attack against China.<sup>36</sup>

Taking the long view, however, generally presents a less optimistic picture. In 1983, before

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Gorbachev's ascension in the Soviet Union, Donald S. Zagoria characterized Sino-Soviet detente as being primarily tactical for both sides. Factors such as long-standing cultural animosity, historical skepticism regarding the other side's true intentions, and intractable geopolitical problems (such as Moscow's "two-front" position, the vulnerability of Siberia and the Soviet Far East in general, the unresolved territorial claims of both sides, China's growing relationships with the United States and Japan, and the Soviet Union's relative political isolation in Northeast Asia) militate against a rapid and fundamental change in Sino-Soviet relations.<sup>37</sup>

Despite Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech and his recognition of growing world interdependence—that the security interests of all nations must be taken into account to produce genuine security—Zagoria's assessment remains essentially accurate. Gorbachev's "peace offensive" and "smile diplomacy," though a marked change from the methods of past Soviet leaders, appear to have done little to eradicate Chinese suspicions and fears about Soviet motives in Asia.

In viewing the long-term Soviet threat, then, China knows that it may now be facing a much more dangerous adversary, one that is increasingly flexible and imaginative in using other components of national power such as diplomacy and economic incentives to supplement its growing military power as it strives to redress the unfavorable "correlation of forces" in Northeast Asia. Chinese belief that the new Soviet look in Asia is essentially tactical in nature is also expressed in

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the view among some Chinese analysts that Gorbachev is resorting to new methods because the Soviet Union is strategically overextended throughout the world with an insufficient economic and industrial base to maintain its position.<sup>38</sup> This would appear to be particularly true in the Soviet Far East, where the industrial infrastructure and transportation system lag far behind those in the western Soviet Union, making logistic support of Far East forces in a prolonged major conflict extremely problematic.<sup>39</sup> Through his new-look foreign policy and internal economic and political reforms, Gorbachev hopes to hold the current line while generating the resources necessary to resume the long-term competition with the Soviet Union's major adversaries. The general expectation is that Soviet military strength in the region will continue to grow well into the future, with particular emphasis on theater nuclear forces, air and naval forces, and the replacement and upgrading of older weapons.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, though there is some disagreement over Gorbachev's ultimate goals toward China, as throughout the world,<sup>41</sup> China's long-term view is one of overall wariness and caution. Though it welcomes the Soviet Union's current strategic predicament and concomitant reduction in Sino-Soviet tension, China is also using the tactical respite to reduce resources devoted to its own military and channel them instead into economic modernization. The fact that military modernization is always listed in last priority among China's "four modernizations" (agriculture, industry, and science and technology are the first three) is not

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an indication that the Chinese do not feel threatened. Rather, it is a recognition that the short-term threat to its security, based on global political and military trends, is small in relation to the need for developing the strong economic and industrial base that will provide abundant resources to meet the long-term threats to its security.<sup>12</sup> Using Sino-Soviet rapprochement as a tactical respite, China hopes to develop the modern armed forces and defense industries necessary to independently meet future strategic threats from the Soviet Union or any other power. Into the 21st century, then, China will continue to view the Soviets as a serious, indeed the primary, threat to its security.

#### *GROWING JAPANESE CONCERN*

Not facing the threat of an overland invasion and enjoying a unique security relationship with the United States, Japan's modern view of the threat to its security has developed quite differently than China's. For most of the postwar era, Japan has felt quite secure under the US strategic "nuclear umbrella" and commitment to Japan's defense, formally codified in the Mutual Security Treaty of 1960. Japanese administrations have therefore been free to pursue the popular policies of limited defense preparedness and restrictive collective security expressed in Japan's "peace constitution."

Instituted under the guidance and direction of General MacArthur and his staff during the postwar occupation, the new constitution eliminated the political authority of the emperor,



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strengthened the legislative institution, and established civilian control of the military and guarantees of human rights.<sup>13</sup> The sobriquet "peace constitution" derives primarily from article nine:

##### Chapter Two. Renunciation of War

Article 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat of force as a means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the State will not be recognized.<sup>14</sup>

The lofty sentiments expressed in article nine, though intended by both the Japanese and US *occupation authorities* to be taken quite literally, soon collided with the hard international realities of the cold war era. The United States soon became involved under the Truman Doctrine in containing communist expansion and subversion throughout the world. The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 brought the new reality and the extent of growing US global commitments directly to Japan's doorstep. Even before the North Korean attack, General MacArthur, in his New Year's message to the Japanese people in January of the same year, had emphasized that article nine had not taken from Japan the inherent right of self-defense, laying the foundation for the modern Japan Self Defense Forces. Beginning as a "National Police Reserve" charged with maintaining internal order and stability, the Self-Defense Forces have evolved into separate

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ground, maritime, and air military services clearly intended to defend the country from outside military aggression.<sup>15</sup>

The activities of the three Self-Defense Forces, however, have been severely proscribed under the pressures of both domestic public opinion and the fears of Japan's neighbors. As a result, government defense policy has evolved more slowly than the international environment surrounding Japan. The size of the Self-Defense Forces has been strictly limited, and the types and modernity of their equipment have been constrained both by severe budget restrictions and interpretations as to their "offensive" potential. Moreover, though its interpretation of the "right of belligerency" has been modified to legitimize the *minimum* amount of armed strength for necessary self defense, the government continues to view article nine as a restriction on collective security arrangements with other nations, authorizing collective military action with other nations only when used for the purpose of defending Japanese territory.<sup>16</sup>

The sensitivity of the collective security issue was clearly displayed during revision of the US-Japan security treaty in 1960, even though the revisions generally decreased US influence in Japan and required no commitment to militarily come to the aid of the United States outside of Japan. Divisions over whether the country should continue to ally itself with the United States, seen by many as an abrogation of the intent of article nine, led to large scale student riots that forced President Eisenhower to cancel his plans to be the

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first postwar US president to visit Japan.<sup>17</sup> As the crisis passed and acceptance of the US-Japan security relationship became more widespread, however, the Japanese government and public have generally recognized the main advantage: a security umbrella, essentially provided free of charge, that lessens the amount of its own resources that it must spend on defense. Consequently, the Japanese have felt small sense of urgency in resolving the ambiguities and deficiencies inherent in postwar defense policies and in fashioning a defense establishment in consonance with the changed conditions of the modern world.

In recent years, however, this sanguine outlook has undergone a pronounced, if incremental, shift. While its beginnings are difficult to pinpoint exactly, the shift probably began in the early 1970s with the US withdrawal from Vietnam and its concomitant implication that the United States was no longer omnipotent in its ability to honor far-flung global commitments. Moreover, in the mid-1970s, the Soviet Far East military buildup began to take on a much broader orientation, shifting its focus from ground forces along the Sino-Soviet border to air, naval, and nuclear missile deployments capable of threatening all of Northeast Asia.

Toward the end of the decade, particularly important events gave further impetus to the changing Japanese perceptions. In 1978 and 1979, the Sino-Japanese peace treaty was signed and China formally abrogated the 1950 Sino-Soviet treaty of friendship and alliance which identified Japan as a common enemy. China now

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not only endorsed the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, but also made public pronouncements strongly advocating a rapid Japanese military buildup to oppose Soviet "hegemonism." During this same period, the Soviets began deploying forces to Kunashir, Etorofu (or Iturup), and Shikotan islands in the disputed Northern Territories off Hokkaido. The Japanese claim all three, and they take Soviet occupation as a particularly serious affront and threat. Finally, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 clearly brought into focus the willingness of the Soviets to use military force to achieve their ends despite the sensibilities and security concerns of its neighbors.<sup>18</sup> In 1980, the Japanese government for the first time explicitly identified the Soviet Union as a major threat to its security.<sup>19</sup>

The Soviets have done little to alleviate Japan's concerns in the 1980s. The buildup on the Northern Territories has continued, with the combined strength of troops deployed there the equivalent of a division equipped with the standard tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery, and anti-aircraft missiles. Additionally, such potent weapons as long-range 130mm cannons and Mi-24 attack helicopters, not usually associated with a standard Soviet division, are in evidence. To supplement these ground forces in the Northern Territories, the Soviets have deployed about 40 MiG-23s on Etorofu, well within range of key targets on Hokkaido and northern Honshu.

Furthermore, Soviet aircraft and ship movements around Japan include such threatening aspects as routine violations of Japanese airspace

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and territorial waters.<sup>70</sup> The Japan Air Self-Defense Force launches about 900 aircraft per year to intercept and track Soviet aircraft probing Japanese defenses.<sup>71</sup> Finally, recent Soviet sea exercises near the Japanese archipelago have become markedly more offensive in nature, with carrier task force, amphibious assault, submarine, and land-based strategic aircraft operations clearly intended to intimidate by simulating invasion of Japanese territory and disruption of critical Japanese sea lanes.<sup>72</sup> Most experts would assess current Soviet capability to mount a full-scale invasion of Japan as marginal. The message such maneuvers carry concerning *future* capabilities and intentions, however, cannot be comforting to Japanese who thoughtfully analyze defense issues.

Growing Soviet nuclear capabilities have also played a significant role in Japan's reevaluation of its defense policies. Strategic nuclear parity between the United States and the Soviet Union has brought into question both the utility and credibility of the US nuclear umbrella. Even more threatening, in both the military and political sense, have been Soviet nuclear missile deployments in Asia. As with Soviet nuclear weapons capable of striking the non-nuclear nations of Europe, the intention is undoubtedly to foster a sense of helplessness and defeatism that the Soviets hope will eventually lead to a split in the US-Japan alliance and possibly to "Finlandization" of Japan.<sup>73</sup>

The changing perceptions brought about by these aggressive Soviet policies have resulted in a gradual awakening of defense consciousness in

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the Japanese body politic since the mid-1970s. In 1976, partially as a response to public fears over possible unconstrained growth of Japan's military capabilities and partially as an attempt to relate growth and modernization of the Self-Defense Forces to the actual security conditions surrounding Japan, the government formulated the National Defense Program Outline as a blueprint for strengthening and modernizing the Japan Self-Defense Forces in the future. Though it specified no time period for completion and set only modest goals (to give Japan the military capability to repel "limited, small scale aggression"), it nonetheless represented the beginnings of a serious attempt to define Japanese security problems and develop appropriate force levels to deal with them.<sup>51</sup> Despite changing public perceptions, anti-military sentiment was still a major factor in Japan's defense policy. As if to underscore this point, the National Defense Program Outline, itself inspired partly by anti-military sentiment, was followed later the same year by the government's policy decision under Prime Minister Miki to limit future defense expenditures to one percent of GNP.<sup>52</sup>

Defense consciousness in Japan continued to grow, however. Recognizing Japan could not meet the rapidly growing Soviet threat by itself, the Japanese government took a major step forward in 1978, establishing the "Guidelines for Defense Cooperation" with the United States. This document allowed for direct contact between US and Japanese military services in conducting "studies ... for the purpose of smoothly carrying

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out joint defense planning for the defense of Japan."<sup>56</sup> Such direct planning activities between US and Japanese forces had hitherto been prohibited because of the government's fears that the public would interpret them as a violation of the collective security restrictions inherent in article nine of the constitution. The growing Soviet threat allowed the government to stretch its interpretation of this provision to allow joint action with other nations as long as it was solely for the defense of Japan.

Nevertheless, continuing sensitivity of the issue is expressed through the preamble to the guidelines, which states that the results of the studies conducted place no obligations on either government.<sup>57</sup> Despite this caveat, an important concrete and practical result of such studies has been a growth in the size and scope of combined US-Japanese military exercises, such as the October 1986 Keen Edge field exercise in Hokkaido involving ground, air, and maritime forces from both countries—the largest combined field exercise ever held in Japan.<sup>58</sup> Adverse Japanese public opinion would have made such an exercise politically unthinkable only a few years ago.

Since the promulgation of the guidelines, Japan has taken several other actions designed to increase its security in the face of the Soviet threat. In 1981, Prime Minister Suzuki formulated the notion of Japan assuming greater responsibility for protecting its sea lanes out to 1,000 nautical miles, to include the sea lanes extending south and east of Tokyo toward Taiwan and Guam, as well as an area of maritime operations

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"covering several hundred nautical miles in the surrounding waters" of Japan.<sup>59</sup> Though the details of how much responsibility Japan will assume in these areas and how it will operationally go about accomplishing such a formidable task remain nebulous, such a capability has obvious regional implications. To accommodate such new concepts, the government has broadened its interpretation of what is allowed under the guise of self-defense. Clearly, for example, the right of self-defense is now not necessarily confined to Japanese territorial land, sea, and air space, and interpretations of what constitutes an "offensive" weapons system have changed to allow weapons of greater reach and capability.

In other actions that directly respond to new strategic realities, the Japan Defense Agency has developed plans for reorganizing the Japan Ground Self-Defense Forces to better meet the threat of a Soviet invasion of Hokkaido, Japan's most vulnerable area due to its proximity to the Soviet Union and its position astride the strategic Tsugaru and La Perouse Straits. The plans include shifting forces from the southern Japanese islands to Hokkaido and equipping them with new "surface to ship" missiles and anti-tank helicopters to defeat the enemy "at the water's edge."<sup>60</sup>

The Defense Agency has also planned reforms that will expand the reserves and strengthen the capability of the three Self-Defense Forces to conduct joint operations,<sup>61</sup> another area of postwar public sensitivity, deriving from the fear that "collusion" among the military services



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could again lead Japan down a militaristic course. And finally, the government has fully adopted the Defense Agency's 1986-90 "Mid-term Defense Plan," a five-year defense spending program that if funded yearly as scheduled will complete the goals of the National Defense Program Outline. Perhaps even more significant symbolically, the government adopted the plan realizing that it would eventually lead to exceeding the one percent of GNP restriction on the yearly defense budget, scrapping the government's ten-year-old policy. This in fact occurred in the second yearly budget of the plan, with approved spending reaching 1.004 percent of GNP in 1987.<sup>62</sup> Also, to place Japan's defense expenditures in proper perspective, the size of the Japanese economy makes a defense budget on the order of 1 percent of GNP the eighth largest in the world in absolute terms.<sup>63</sup>

Despite these steps and the growing public awareness of the need for a stronger defense, Japan's forces pale in comparison with Soviet conventional and nuclear power in Northeast Asia. The international environment on which Japan predicated the 1976 National Defense Program Outline has drastically changed with the massive Soviet buildup of the last decade. Yet Japan will not physically complete the goals of this plan until the early 1990s. How then, does Japan view the new Soviet Asian policies as outlined by Gorbachev at Vladivostok?

As with the Chinese, much skepticism exists among the Japanese leadership and public regarding Soviet intentions. Gorbachev's admonitions that the Soviets and Japanese should cooperate

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"free from the problems of the past" are interpreted as the standard Soviet position on the Northern Territories territorial dispute. Completely ignoring Japanese claims, Soviet officials assert that no such disputes exist between Japan and the Soviet Union.

The proposal for a Helsinki-type conference for the Pacific is greeted with equal suspicion. Japanese officials believe the real goal of this proposal is to freeze current international borders, legitimizing Soviet territorial gains. Moreover, Soviet formulations of this concept, beginning with Brezhnev's original Asian collective security proposal in 1969, call for the dismantling of military alliances and removal of foreign military installations and forces, actions that would force Japan to abandon the core of its foreign policy—the security treaty with the United States—and leave the country totally vulnerable to Soviet domination.<sup>61</sup> Some Japanese analysts have traced the origins of such methods to legitimize territorial acquisition and neutralize countries on its borders back to the time of Lenin, emphasizing the consistency and longevity of Soviet diplomacy and foreign policy.<sup>62</sup>

Virtually all the Japanese mass circulation daily newspapers—some of which are markedly pacifist on defense issues—editorialized strongly against Gorbachev's proposals for Asian security, emphasizing that the Soviets historically say one thing while doing another.<sup>63</sup> Japanese public wariness is perhaps further reflected in annual opinion polls conducted by major newspapers that rate the peoples of other nations on how well they are

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liked: the Soviets always end up near the bottom of the list, usually just above the Koreans.

Prospects for improved bilateral economic and political relations, though showing some recent positive signs, have to be characterized as dim until such fundamental issues as the Northern Territories dispute are solved—an unlikely prospect given the historical intransigence of the Soviets on territorial issues and the equally strong Japanese feeling regarding the moral rightness of its claims and the national honor at stake. Eduard Shevardnadze's visit to Japan in early 1986, prior to Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech, was the first by a Soviet foreign minister since 1976. Gorbachev further raised hopes at Vladivostok that he would be the first supreme Soviet leader to visit Japan since the end of World War II (four postwar Japanese prime ministers have visited Moscow).<sup>67</sup> But when invited by Prime Minister Nakasone to visit Japan in early 1987, the Soviets suddenly raised the precondition that the two governments sign agreements on long-term economic cooperation and bilateral friendship. Japan views such agreements as contravening its standing policy that a formal World War II peace treaty (none has yet been signed between the two nations) encompassing the settlement of the Northern Territories issue in Japan's favor is a precondition for improving relations.<sup>68</sup>

Gorbachev's solicitation of Japanese economic assistance in developing Siberia and the Soviet Far East appears only slightly less problematic. Though the Soviets have asked Japan to make proposals on Japanese investment in joint venture

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projects in Siberia, they have developed no procedures and regulations for actually implementing the proposals. Furthermore, the general weakness of the Soviet economy, particularly the large drop in foreign exchange earnings, raises questions as to the ability of the Soviet Union to make such investments profitable for Japanese business.<sup>69</sup>

Toward the end of the century then, Japan, like China, will continue to view the Soviet Union as its prime adversary and an ever growing security threat, despite some thawing in the overall relationship. The Japanese government and public will continue to resolve the ambiguities and uncertainties that currently plague the country's security policies, gradually increasing defense efforts, though at a pace constrained by internal economic and political factors as well as the concerns of other friendly Asian-Pacific nations.

#### *THE SOUTH KOREAN VIEW*

Turning now to the third nation in the Northeast Asia triangle, determining how South Korea views the Soviet threat becomes even more complex, requiring an examination of the overall situation on the Korean Peninsula. Because the interests of four major powers—China, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States—converge here in a relatively small land area, Chinese analysts have dichotomously characterized this situation as unique in the world, with “compressed relations” that essentially remain “stable in an unstable position”—stable because none of the four major powers wants renewed conflict on the peninsula,

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unstable because of the heavily militarized dividing line between North and South Korea and the internal political instability in both countries.<sup>70</sup>

Significant changes in the alignment of the four major powers with interests on the peninsula have radically altered South Korean threat perceptions. Until the early 1980s, the South looked almost exclusively at a heavily armed North Korea, with whom it is still technically at war (only an armistice agreement, not a peace treaty, concluding the fighting in 1953), supported materially and rhetorically by both the Soviet Union and China, albeit to different degrees at different times. Because of its strong aspirations for independence, North Korea has been characterized as a swinging pendulum in its relations with the two communist giants on its northern border, playing the influence of one off on the other to avoid excessive dependence on or subservience to either. In actuality, however, the North Korean "pendulum" does not judiciously follow the laws of physics: the swings toward China have been more substantive, characterized by historic and strategic logic as opposed to the tactical and temporary nature of tilts toward the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> This has been true for various reasons, including a greater Korean cultural affinity for the Chinese, gratitude for the Chinese "blood debt" during the Korean War, and because China, being a much weaker country than the Soviet Union, represented much less a threat to North Korea.

For its part, the Soviet Union has viewed Kim Il Sung's unwillingness to accept Soviet leadership and patrimony, his ingratitude for Soviet material

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assistance during the Korean War, and his adventurism and risk-taking in foreign relations as being inimical to Soviet interests.<sup>72</sup> In the early 1970s, the culmination of these factors led Moscow to cease transferring state of the art military equipment and technology to North Korea.<sup>73</sup>

With its new program of pragmatism, modernization, and expanding contact with the outside world, China has modified its policy toward the Korean Peninsula. This new course became especially noticeable after the hijacking of a Chinese aircraft to South Korea in May 1983 and the Rangoon bombing of South Korean government officials in October. Since that time, China has distanced itself from North Korean policies in many respects, while at the same time increasing its economic, athletic, and scientific contacts with South Korea. Reflecting its strong desire to maintain stability in the region so that it can pursue its internal modernization goals, China's actions amount to a de facto recognition of South Korea's legitimacy. Moreover, Deng Xiaoping has explicitly stated, "We do not necessarily agree with some policies made by North Korea,"<sup>74</sup> which can be interpreted without too great a stretch of the imagination as meaning that China would not support an attack by North Korea against the South. Thus, the historic and strategic logic underpinning North Korea's relationship with China is rapidly changing. With a vacuum on the Chinese side of its arc, it appears that the North Korean pendulum must swing toward the Soviets, increasing South Korean awareness of a Soviet threat to its security.

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Before evaluating the Soviet threat, however, South Korea must look beyond a formidable North Korean threat that has grown markedly in the past decade. Ground troops have more than doubled to a total of approximately 750,000, with an equivalent doubling of major ground force weapons systems (tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery tubes).<sup>75</sup> Approximately 100,000 of these troops are rangers or commandos—perhaps the world's largest commando force—that would be the vanguard of a North Korean attack, inserted by sea and air behind main South Korean and US lines to perform guerrilla missions of sabotage and disruption.<sup>76</sup> The North Korean Air Force has increased its inventory of combat aircraft to over 850, though most of them are older Soviet and Chinese MiG-21, MiG-19, and MiG-17 models. And the North Korean Navy now possesses a versatile force of over 500 combat vessels, including 25 submarines.<sup>77</sup> To produce such growth, one fifth to nearly one quarter of total North Korean economic output must go to defense, estimates for the past five years ranging from 19 to 24 percent of GNP.<sup>78</sup>

As it looks toward the Soviet Union, South Korea in fact has recently begun to see a blending of the Soviet and North Korean threats. In 1984 North Korea began what appeared to be a definite "tilt" toward Moscow in its normally equidistant relations between China and the Soviet Union. Rather than a tilt, some observers have suggested that the two countries were actually "reeling in slack" created during the 1970s by Soviet fear of North Korean adventurism and Kim Il Sung's

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tendency to side with Maoist China in the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute. Whatever the metaphor, both sides have since given strong indications that the upgraded relations are more than a temporary, tactical expedient like North Korean tilts toward the Soviets in the past.<sup>79</sup> The two countries have concluded their first military agreements since the late 1960s, including the transfer of 40–50 modern Soviet MiG–23 aircraft to North Korea<sup>80</sup> in exchange for overflight rights for Soviet surveillance aircraft and use of North Korean port facilities by Soviet naval vessels.<sup>81</sup> The Soviets have also supplied North Korea with new T-72 tanks and sophisticated SA-3 air defense missiles.<sup>82</sup>

In January 1986 Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze visited Pyongyang—the first such visit ever—and he described Soviet relations with North Korea as “currently advancing to a new and higher stage.” Exchange visits of air squadrons and naval fleets between the two countries, with a North Korean fleet making an unprecedented port call at Vladivostok in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the North Korean–Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, further emphasize the military nature of this growing relationship.<sup>83</sup>

South Korean fears of Soviet–North Korean collusion in turn begin to blend with regional fears of overall Soviet intentions. The Soviets have used their overflight privileges to conduct reconnaissance missions against all three nations of the Northeast Asia triangle as well as US forces and installations, providing increased security and



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greatly shortening and simplifying previous routes.<sup>84</sup> Rumors of Soviet pressure on North Korea to accede basing rights for Soviet forces, though as yet unsubstantiated, are particularly unsettling to South Korea, and indeed, to China, Japan and the United States as well. An agreement to use the port of Nampo on the North Korean west coast, for example, would obviate the need of Soviet warships currently based in Vladivostok and other Far East ports to pass through the narrow Korea (Tsushima) Straits between Japan and South Korea to gain access to the open Pacific.

Soviet military bases in North Korea would radically alter the entire strategic equation in Northeast Asia. They would allow the Soviets not only to place increased pressure on the United States through its South Korean ally, but also to outflank China's key industrial region of Manchuria. The Soviets could, through the "Korean dagger pointed at the heart of Japan," bring increased power to bear in their efforts to intimidate the Japanese into reevaluating the utility of their strategic relationship with the United States. Such an accomplishment would be a major step toward creating a "buffer" on the Soviet far eastern border similar to that formed by the Eastern European states in the west. In such a new pro-Soviet Northeast Asian alignment, North Korea would play the role of an East Germany: efficient, loyal and militarily stable, the linchpin of Soviet regional policy.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the regional fears engendered by such a possibility, collusion between North Korea

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and the Soviet Union on such a scale would require radical policy changes in both countries. On the North Korean side, it would require abandoning Kim Il Sung's long-standing goal of an independent and self-reliant North Korea. For the Soviets, establishing bases in North Korea would completely undermine Gorbachev's new diplomatic initiatives in Asia, particularly those with China and Japan. On the surface at least, many Chinese analysts subscribe to this view, sanguine in the belief that North Korea values its independence above all else and that Soviet motives can mainly be ascribed to countering US-Japanese-South Korean military cooperation in the region rather than being anti-Chinese.<sup>86</sup>

Given current uncertainties ahead in both North Korea and the Soviet Union, however, this turn of events should not be discounted when peering out to the turn of the century. For one thing, there is the question of whether the North Korean economy can generate the resources necessary to sustain its military competition with the South. From 1945 to the mid-1960s North Korea under Kim Il Sung transformed itself from a weak Japanese colony to an industrial state, sustaining an annual GNP growth in excess of 12 percent and per capita incomes well above those in the South. The situation then began to reverse itself, however, and South Korean economic growth began to catch up with and then surpass falling growth rates in the North: since the mid-1960s, South Korea has averaged a 9 percent growth rate, while that in the North fell to only 4.5 percent during the 1978-84 seven-year plan.<sup>87</sup>

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A 1984 Rand Corporation study using econometric models of the two national economies predicts that the South's economic and technical advantages will cause its economic preponderance over the North to increase markedly as the end of the century approaches. Based on predicted 5–6 percent per annum growth (South Korea's actual growth rate in 1986 was 11 percent) in South Korea and 2.5–3 percent in the North, the study projects a South Korean economy more than six times larger than North Korea's by the mid-1990s. At this stage North Korea would have to increase its defense spending to 36–42 percent of GNP to match the resources generated in the South with its current average defense spending of only 6–7 percent of GNP.<sup>88</sup> Confirming the optimism of this study, US and South Korean government officials and academics predict that South Korea will be able to independently provide for its defense against the North Korean threat sometime in the early to mid-1990s.<sup>89</sup>

For North Korea, the implications are clear, and three courses of action would seem to exist: (1) The North Koreans could maintain the status quo, allowing the South's dominance and influence to grow and gradually undercut the legitimacy of P'vongyang's claim to be able to provide the most beneficial rule over a united Korea. (2) They could follow the Vietnamese model, increasing dependence on the Soviet Union and thereby becoming subject to any quid pro quo the Soviets may extract for their largess. Or (3) they could follow the Chinese model (as in fact the Chinese hope they will) and open the country to the

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outside world, thereby sacrificing the nearly total control the North Korean Communist Party exercises over the people. Despite the dilemma that this situation currently imposes, Kim Il Sung has not moved the country decisively toward either the second or third alternative, and in fact, conflicting signals have emanated from Pyongyang.

Indicating increased reliance on the Soviets and apparent rejection of a Chinese-style economic liberalization program, the Soviet share of North Korea's total foreign trade is again approaching the level of dominance it achieved in the 1960s, rising from 22.2 percent of imports and 26.2 percent of exports in 1980 to 47.2 percent and 37.2 percent, respectively, in 1985.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, the country has made recent overtures to Japan concerning increased trade and joint business ventures, as well as soliciting production orders from other countries.<sup>91</sup> Given the dearth of information on internal politics in North Korea and the progress of Kim's attempts to install his son, Kim Jong Il, as his dynastic successor, predicting North Korea's future path is fraught with uncertainty. Should Gorbachev run into difficulties in accomplishing his internal reforms and in achieving progress with the objectives outlined at Vladivostok, perhaps a much stronger Soviet-North Korean alliance, including Soviet basing rights in North Korea, may be seen by both countries as the only way to prevent unacceptable retrenchment in their long-term objectives.

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Consequently, the South Korean view of the threat to its security, though still largely focused on the formidable array of forces facing it across the Demilitarized Zone, will increasingly look beyond the horizon to the Soviets. At the same time, as its economy continues to grow and its interdependence with other states in the region and the world continues to increase toward the end of the century, it will have to look more and more toward cooperation with other nations in the region to ensure its security.

#### *A SECURITY COALITION FOR NORTHEAST ASIA*

From the preceding country-by-country analysis of threat and response, it should by now be clear that China, Japan, and South Korea in providing for their own security in Northeast Asia must increasingly take the security concerns and actions of the other states into account. China, due to its vast territory and population, has achieved the distinction, despite its relative economic backwardness, of being one of the least desirable nations in the world to attack. Japan and South Korea are each in their own way and at their own pace employing their economic power to achieve a similar status. To maintain the level of individual security inherent in these achievements, however, each depends on the efforts of the other to prevent a consolidation of the Soviet threat against any one that could reverse such optimistic assessments.

As a result of this situation and the pervasive US presence in the region, the Soviet Union and

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North Korea, on the occasion of the Soviet Foreign Minister's visit to Pyongyang in early 1986, jointly accused the United States, Japan, and South Korea of trying to forge a NATO-style military alliance in Northeast Asia.<sup>92</sup> Though Moscow and Pyongyang excluded China from their accusation, instead calling for "normalizing Soviet-Chinese relations on an equal and mutually acceptable basis," it has, in fact, been China's changing perspective on the Korean Peninsula and the resultant four-power realignment in the region, that has led to a de facto security coalition, analogous in many respects to that existing in NATO Europe, among China, Japan, and Korea. To be sure, no formal alliance, with attendant treaties, agreements, and consultation forums, exists, nor are there even any informal consultations to provide an explicit framework or continuing guidance for this coalition. But a synergistic division of security responsibility comparable to the division between NATO's Northern, Central, and Southern Regions is nonetheless apparent. And also like NATO, when US forces and capabilities are added, the whole, indeed, becomes greater than the sum of the parts.

Dividing our de facto Northeast Asian coalition into its geographic constituents, China holds down the "western flank," tying down the more than 50 Soviet divisions on the long Sino-Soviet border. As long as these forces must guard against the Chinese forces across the border, it is very difficult for the Soviets to mass the troops and equipment they would need for an invasion of Japan or

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a thrust toward Japan through South Korea in combination with North Korean forces.

In the "central region" of this coalition, South Korea, with its increasingly independent military capability, remains the bulwark against the threat to both its own existence and to Japan that would be in evidence were North Korea to unify the peninsula on its own terms. As South Korea's economic and political power grows toward the end of the century, enabling it to achieve essential independence in countering North Korea, it will commensurately play a larger role in deterring Soviet power in its own right. Though parallels are inexact, the "central front" in the Northeast Asian coalition, represented by a divided Korea, is the key focus of great power interest just as divided Germany is the key focus of the central front in Europe. As South Korea continues its drive to become one of the world's great economic powers, its role in Asia will increasingly match that of West Germany in Europe.

Finally moving to the "eastern flank" of our coalition, Japan, with its strategic position guarding the key straits that the Soviet fleet must penetrate in order to reach the open Pacific and conduct flanking maneuvers around the other members of the coalition to the south and west, plays a role similar to Norway and Iceland in NATO, both geographically and in terms of providing bases for US forces. With its growing defense capabilities and commitment to sea lane defense, Japan can indeed become the unsinkable aircraft carrier on the coalition's eastern flank.

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The role of the US commitment to the coalition is also similar to that it plays in NATO. Providing the strategic "nuclear umbrella" for Japan and South Korea and the "strategic counterweight" that China needs to balance Soviet nuclear capabilities, the United States also provides the conventional forces needed to fill critical gaps throughout the coalition and to ensure that the key lines of communication with the outside world remain open. Although the United States has no land based theater missiles in the region, new systems such as the nuclear-capable Tomahawk cruise missile deployed on renovated battleships can assume the role of balancing Soviet theater nuclear capability.

Despite the lack of hard commitment and consultations, the broad policies of the nations of the Northeast Asian triangle support this coalition. Since the signing of the Sino-Japanese friendship treaty in 1978, China and Japan have expressed agreement with each other's defense policies. In 1984, for example, Chinese Defense Minister Zhang Aiping, while telling his Japanese counterpart, "a friendly and cooperative relationship between Japan and China will contribute not only to peace in Asia but also to the whole world," also said that Japan "needs a strong defense capability" and that the Japan-US security treaty is "necessary to strengthen Japanese defense capability."<sup>93</sup> China further consistently supports Japan in its Northern Territories dispute with the Soviets,<sup>94</sup> while the growth of the Soviet threat has brought about a growing appreciation in Japan of



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the contribution China makes to Japan's security with its forces on the Soviet border.<sup>95</sup>

Numerous exchanges of defense attaches, exchange visits of high-ranking personnel of the People's Liberation Army and Japan Defense Agency, visits by non-official groups of high-ranking retired JDA officers (some acting as consultants for defense industries), and exchanges of students and instructors between various Japanese and Chinese military academies, though remaining generally low key, have served to strengthen the relationship.<sup>96</sup> In a 1985 visit of the Japanese Defense Agency vice minister to Beijing, Chinese and Japanese defense officials discussed the Soviet military buildup in Asia, agreeing on the "potential threat" to both countries and laying plans for possible naval fleet exchange visits in the future.<sup>97</sup> More recently, in perhaps a symbolic display of the permanence of these feelings, the first visit of a Japanese defense minister to China in 40 years went ahead in the spring of 1987, despite rising tensions between the two countries over trade, over Japan's symbolic breaking of the one percent of GNP restriction on defense spending, and over the actions of ultra-nationalist groups in Japan demanding government absolution for war criminals convicted during the Tokyo trials at the end of World War II.<sup>98</sup> Undoubtedly, Chinese policy toward Japan's future strategic role has become somewhat more ambivalent with the recent thaw in Sino-Soviet hostility, yet the broad understanding that Japan must assume a larger role both economically and militarily (with potential

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resurgent militarism constrained by US ties) remains strong.<sup>99</sup>

With regard to Korea, the mutual cultural animosity between Japan and Korea has limited Japanese and Korean military cooperation, though regular exchanges such as those between China and Japan outlined above do occur. The key point, however, is that cultural animosity has not interfered with the two nations' strategic understandings relevant to the informal coalition. And with formal and informal ties between the two countries increasing in general, it is only a matter of time before these strategic understandings are translated into closer practical cooperative efforts.

Though military cooperation between Seoul and Beijing may be a long way off, their increasingly common perspective on events in the region and on the peninsula will lay the basis for such cooperation should they eventually diplomatically recognize one another. Recalling ancient history, it was the southern Silla dynasty on the Korean Peninsula that eventually conquered the north with China's help to unify the country for the first time in the seventh century. Perhaps as the 21st century approaches, a southern "kingdom" will again unify the peninsula, conquering the north with China's help once again, but this time through economic and political means rather than military force.

Unless the Soviets drastically deviate from the threat scenario projected earlier in this chapter, abandoning the overarching goal of continuing to strengthen their coercive power into the next

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century, the strategic underpinnings of a continued informal alliance or strategic partnership among China, Japan, and South Korea will remain firmly in place. Moreover, when coupled with the growing economic, political, and social interdependencies outlined in the previous chapter, other significant areas of potential increased security cooperation could open up. One such possible area is in arms sales among the three countries.

The barriers against such activity would seem to be formidable. Japan, for example, developed the "Three Principles Concerning Weapons Exports" in 1967, restricting Japan from shipping weapons to nations in the communist bloc, under United Nations arms embargoes, or that were engaged or might become engaged in conflict. In 1976, the Miki government formally extended the ban to all Japanese arms exports.<sup>100</sup> South Korea has no such compunctions and has freely exported arms to many countries throughout the world to support the growth of its defense industries. But arms shipments to Japan or China would currently be unthinkable. China, despite its changing stance on the Korean Peninsula, continues to value its friendship with North Korea, professes to be a communist state, and has strongly indicated its intention to rely on independent domestic development of arms industries. The Japanese defense industries, without an international market of their own to rely on, would firmly oppose any arms imports from Korea. As far as Chinese arms exports are concerned, the current level of technology would be

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much too low for Japan and Korea to even consider.

Changes already underway could alter this situation as the region enters the next century. As the distinction between weapons and weapons-related technology has become increasingly blurred, for example, Japan has subtly shifted its policies, particularly in the area of computers and other electronic equipment with defense applications, allowing some sales to private firms in other countries.<sup>101</sup> Another problem for Japan is that its defense industries are booming, relying less on US technology and co-production agreements and increasingly employing extensive research and development for indigenous production of front-line military equipment such as warships, tanks, jet fighter aircraft, and guided missiles.<sup>102</sup> But with Japan's relatively small defense budget, the economies of scale necessary to drive costs down are difficult to achieve. Add to this South Korea's uninhibited desire to export arms and to move into some of the same areas (lightweight jet-fighters, small turboprop commercial transport aircraft, very-short-takeoff-and-landing technology) that Japan hopes to exploit,<sup>103</sup> and it seems evident that Japan will someday considerably modify its arms exports restrictions.

The China market, moreover, would seem to be a primary area for both Japanese and South Korean defense industries to expand into. If the growing economic and trade relationship outlined in the previous chapter continues, and China continues its movement away from North Korea and closer to the South—perhaps leading eventually to

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full diplomatic relations between the two—incentives for China to tap both Korean and Japanese technology in its defense modernization would be considerable. Joint development and co-production arrangements would then be feasible, and with shared technology and markets, all three countries would stand to benefit in both economic and security terms, just as Western European countries have benefited from their efforts at common defense production and procurement.

Thus, no institutionalized security relationship exists among China, Japan, and Korea at the present time, and none is likely to materialize in the near term. However, the security considerations presented in this chapter, coupled with the economic, political, and social considerations outlined in the previous chapter, indicate that the infrastructure is developing upon which a more formal security relationship must be based. Many variables may of course affect the situation. But should economic and political interdependence among these nations continue to grow, while at the same time the Soviet Union continues to pose a major threat, the trend will be toward strengthening the *de facto* security coalition among the nations of the Northeast Asian triangle, and perhaps even toward the establishment of more formalized security arrangements. At some point, the Rubicon may be crossed, and all three nations may see overwhelming advantage in establishing some kind of institutionalized structure in conjunction with the United States. While this remains a hypothetical speculation, the *de facto* coalition that currently exists is a fact; if maintained into the

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future, it may alone be sufficient to protect the security interests of the Northeast Asian nations and the United States.

## Five

### THE TRIANGLE AND THE UNITED STATES

*To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.... Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy.*

—Sun Tzu,  
*The Art of War*

The United States faces a central dilemma in developing policy and strategy for Northeast Asia as the 21st century approaches. On the one hand, if the threat projections from the previous chapter are correct, the United States must plan to counter increasingly sophisticated Soviet moves in the region—not just in the military sphere, but throughout the entire range of

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the varied instruments of national power—well into the coming century. In other words, according to the dictates of Sun Tzu, the United States must attack the Soviet grand strategy in Northeast Asia, countering Soviet efforts to intimidate, divide, and sow dissension among US allies and friends. Furthermore, such efforts must occur in a time of growing US commitments in other areas of the globe and declining US economic power relative to other nations of the free world.

One obvious method of accomplishing this formidable task would be to actively promote greater unity among the nations of the Northeast Asia triangle, attempting to form a NATO-like alliance, dominated by the United States. On the other hand, B. H. Liddell Hart warns of the dangers inherent in seeking a strongly unified alliance system:

History provides little warrant for the belief that real progress, and the freedom that makes progress possible, lies in unification. For where unification has been able to establish unity of ideas it has usually ended in uniformity, paralyzing the growth of new ideas. And where the unification has merely brought about an artificial or imposed unity, its irksomeness has led through discord to disruption.<sup>1</sup>

The NATO alliance, though few would doubt its overall success over the years, nevertheless seems to confirm Liddell Hart's observations. The problem with NATO has been confusion and disagreement over what the unifying force in the alliance should be. In the years immediately after its founding, European members of the alliance, due to their relative military and economic



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weakness, essentially agreed that the US commitment was the force that held the alliance together. In addition, they were more than willing to accept US dominance to ensure the continuation of this unifying force and the integrity of the alliance. As NATO Europe achieved economic recovery and its constituent elements regained both national and pan-European self-confidence, the importance of the US commitment as a unifying force diminished, and US dominance of the alliance often became even somewhat of a disruptive force, with European members often accusing the United States of imposing unity on its own terms. Continued economic progress has also enabled a return to more nationalistic development in NATO countries, leading in turn to widely divergent views on the nature of the Soviet threat and appropriate political, economic, and military NATO responses. The impression that the alliance may be moving "through discord to disruption" is sustained by the growing number of knowledgeable observers and government officials who question the future viability of the alliance.

#### COALITION STRATEGY

While this has been only a cursory look at some of the disruptive forces currently besetting NATO, the trends noted above must certainly be taken into account when attempting to develop an effective US security policy for Northeast Asia into the next century. For despite the pitfalls involved in forging coalitions or alliances, the United States cannot hope to meet the threat alone. Declining US

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economic power starkly portrays the growing mismatch between US security commitments and resources.

The relative domination that the United States has exercised over the postwar world economy has come to an end in the 1980s. The indications are myriad. In 1950, the United States produced 40 percent of the world's goods and services, but by 1980 this share had dropped almost by half to 22 percent; over the same period, Europe's share rose from 21 percent to almost 30 percent and Japan's rose from 2 to about 9 percent. In 1974, the United States designed 70 percent of the world's advanced technology, but by 1984, the figure had dropped to 50 percent, with a continuing slide to 30 percent forecast by 1994; emphasizing this trend, the United States for the first time in 1986 ran a trade deficit in high-technology products.<sup>2</sup>

Any who continue to doubt the decline of US influence in the international economy need only look further to the deteriorating US position in international trade and finance. As late as 1981, for example, despite a merchandise trade deficit for fifteen of the sixteen years prior, the United States maintained an overall current account (which incorporates the value of services, such as US investment overseas and tourism, in addition to actual merchandise exchanged) balance-of-payments surplus. Since then, however, the United States has experienced both a trade and current account deficit, which reached \$117.7 billion in 1985 and grew another 19.5 percent to \$140.6 billion in 1986. Perhaps even more

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ominous, to finance the large merchandise trade deficit as well as the domestic budget deficit, US private and public borrowing from abroad made the United States the world's largest debtor in 1985, owing \$107.4 billion to foreign governments, businesses, and individuals. In 1986, this debt increased to \$220 billion. By contrast, Brazil, the largest debtor nation among those affected by much publicized internal debt crises, owes \$108 billion. Though some economists have predicted that the US trade deficit has reached its peak and will slightly decline in coming years, almost all predict that US foreign debt will continue to grow, reaching as high as \$1 trillion by the early 1990s.

The result of this decreasing relative economic power on US military capability is clear: rigid budget constraints on defense spending are already in evidence, meaning the United States will be able to generate fewer resources to meet its worldwide commitments. In the vision of many US strategic analysts, the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union is a struggle for control of the Eurasian landmass, carried out on three "central strategic fronts": Europe, the Far East, and more recently Southwest Asia.<sup>3</sup> Unless it is to concede control of the Eurasian landmass to the Soviets, tantamount to conceding victory to the Soviets in the long-term competition between the superpowers, the United States must increasingly pursue a coalition strategy with its friends and allies throughout the world in order to effectively cope with this "three-front" problem. As stated by former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Robert W. Komer,

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It is difficult to see how the United States can assure adequate conventional deterrence/defense in three widely separated geographic theaters without much higher defense outlays than are currently foreseeable, or much greater help from its allies.<sup>1</sup>

### *A COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY APPROACH*

Given the growing importance of the region in both US and Soviet strategic calculations, as well as its rising economic power, Northeast Asia should be a prime area for maintaining and strengthening a coalition sympathetic to US aims on the Far East central strategic front. What are the best means, then, for ensuring an effective coalition in Northeast Asia? According to Sun Tzu's precepts, US strategy should aim at defeating its enemies in the region (i.e., the Soviet Union and North Korea) without fighting, by attacking their strategy. As we have seen, unless one concedes a radical and unprecedented departure from historically constant methods of expansion and hegemony, Soviet strategy under Gorbachev has taken the form of a long-range plan to more fully implement the full range of national power inherent in the correlation of forces equation. The USSR seeks to supplant the United States and dominate and impose its will on Northeast Asian nations, just as it does on the Soviet bloc nations of Eastern Europe. Intrinsic to this strategy is the greater use of economic and political means to both supplement military power in the short term and to assist in achieving overwhelming military power in the long term.

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To effectively attack this strategy, the United States should also use all the means at its disposal. The Japanese have a concept for this type of approach, which they call *comprehensive security*. Emerging in the late 1970s in the wake of a series of disturbing external crises—including the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and assistance to the Vietnamese in Cambodia, the Iranian hostage crisis, and the second oil shock in 1979—the Japanese government began to realize that its passive and reactive diplomatic posture was of little effect in an increasingly complex, hostile, and unpredictable world.<sup>5</sup> Some of these crises were primarily military in nature, while others were economic and political. Since its security was threatened on all these fronts, and since the country as a whole was not yet ready to abandon the principles embodied in its postwar constitution, Japan developed the concept to give itself the means to more actively counter all threats to its security while preserving its national character as a peace-loving nation.

Taking a long-range view of Japan's security requirements, comprehensive security recognizes both military and non-military threats and theoretically blends both military and non-military countermeasures. Reaffirmed by successive Japanese governments since, it has become the basis for Japanese foreign and security policies.<sup>6</sup> Comprehensive security is essentially the other side of the Soviet correlation-of-forces coin, emphasizing defensive security as opposed to security by control and domination.

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Theory aside, Japan's critics have disparaged its practical application of the concept as an excuse for continued low defense budgets and a failure to accept international responsibility commensurate with its economic power. The purpose of introducing the concept at this point, however, is not to denigrate Japanese efforts, but to use it as a framework for discussing future US security policy in the region. Indeed, comprehensive security, effectively applied, should be the primary means for the United States to attack Soviet strategy in Northeast Asia.

The Soviets, too, of course, would like to win without fighting in Northeast Asia, hence, their efforts to intimidate and cajole and, eventually, to separate the United States from the nations of the Northeast Asian triangle and to prevent a strengthening of the triangle itself through greater cohesion and security cooperation among its constituent nations. For the United States, therefore, attacking the Soviet strategy through the concept of comprehensive security means strengthening both the triangle and its ties to the United States, using the full range of economic, political, and military means it has available. The difficulty, of course, lies in determining the appropriate mix among these categories and the specific actions to be undertaken within each.

The key principle US policymakers should keep in mind when attempting to deal with such vexing problems is that the US response to Soviet actions need not be symmetric; the United States can overcome areas where it is deficient (e.g., total military power) through emphasizing other areas

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where it enjoys a relative advantage (e.g., economic and political ties). In fact, in view of the differing goals of Soviet and US power—domination and control in the Soviet case versus maintaining a stable environment for political, economic, and social progress in the US perspective—a symmetrical US response to the Soviet Far East military buildup would probably be of overall detriment to the US position.

Furthermore, given historical enmities, diverse stages of economic development, and different political systems among its constituent nations, the United States ought to be extremely selective in both its overall approach and specific methods of applying the comprehensive security concept to the Northeast Asian triangle. Premature attempts to push Northeast Asian nations into formal economic, political, or security relationships, to force solution of longstanding disagreements and problems, or to radically alter the current division of responsibility inherent in the de facto security coalition could destroy the yet tentative trends toward increased integration among nations of the triangle. Such overt US attempts to dominate the triangle and create a stronger coalition or formal alliance would most certainly further validate Liddell Hart's counsel on forcing the pace of "fusion," leading in actuality to less cohesion and a weaker coalition.

Given the foregoing considerations, a US comprehensive security strategy for Northeast Asia must take a more subtle, long-term approach, emphasizing the economic and political dimensions, the areas where the United States currently

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enjoys significant advantage, but where the Soviets under Gorbachev are attempting to challenge. The goal should be to create the economic and political conditions that will increase not only integration within the triangle, but also outside integration with the non-Soviet bloc world economy as a whole.

This comprehensive strategy should rest on four pillars: In the economic realm, the United States should strive to maintain a free and open global trading system. In the political arena, increased pluralism and movement toward democracy at a scale and pace appropriate for the current state of affairs within each country should be the US goal. Militarily, sufficient US forces should remain in the region to assure nations of the triangle of a strong US commitment to countering any overt threat to peace and stability; at the same time, though, those forces should be sized to avoid the appearance of excessive reliance on military power. And underlying the first three pillars, the United States should encourage the triangle to bear an increasing share of the common defense burden.

#### *TRADE PROTECTIONISM*

The threat of increased trade protectionism poses the greatest potential barrier to closer economic integration of the nations within the triangle. The result of the excessively large and seemingly intractable trade deficits of recent years has been a growing clamor from many sectors of US society for tariffs, quotas, and other artificial restrictions



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on imports. Many of these protectionist measures are specifically directed at the nations of North-east Asia, primarily Japan, but increasingly, South Korea, Taiwan, and even China. Since the phenomenal economic development of East Asia over the past decade, during which it has surpassed all other world regions in terms of GNP growth,<sup>7</sup> has been heavily dependent on exports to the United States, it is perhaps natural that fingers should point to the region when assessing blame for deteriorating economic conditions in the United States.

Such emotionalism, however, often tends to ignore the long-term and often intangible benefits of US trade relationships with these nations. Some of these benefits can be directly measured. Although the United States is the number one market for Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, the fact that seven of the top twenty US export markets—including Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong—are in the region is often overlooked.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, US investment in the region, exceeding a value of \$33 billion per year,<sup>9</sup> provides a lucrative return to American business.

Less tangible, but of greater long-term import to US security interests, are regional stability and affinity with US security objectives and policies. Those nations with the closest economic relationship with the United States are also those that have enjoyed the greatest growth and prosperity. Witness Japan's growth from a war-devastated and poverty stricken nation to the world's second largest economy, or South Korea's rapid development, despite its non-industrial past and paucity

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of population and resources, from a similar position at the end of the Korean War to the verge of joining the world's industrial powers. And now China stands at the brink of beginning a similar development course that could bring long absent stability and prosperity to that country while further intertwining its security concerns with those of the United States. The "opportunity cost" of destroying this stability and commonality of interests may not be immediately apparent. Its true value may be approximated, however, by examining less economically dynamic and politically stable regions of the world, such as the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, where a high volume of US military and economic aid is directly targeted at maintaining regional stability. Stability and economic growth, moreover, lay the basis for assuming an increasing share of the military burden of protecting common security interests.

The arguments against protectionism directed at East Asia have ignored another key factor recognized by many prominent free-market economists: much of the problem is due to deficiencies in US industrial practices that have eroded the US competitive edge in many areas. The near-sighted outlook of American business in maximizing short-term profit at the expense of long-term capital reinvestment and increased market share, the low savings rate of the American public, the pressure of organized labor in seeking wage increases above productivity increases, and the inability of management to apply effective techniques that the United States taught the rest of the world—all have been cited as reasons for declining

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American productivity and ability to compete in the international market.

In purely economic terms, attempting to make the nations of Northeast Asia pay for such deficiencies through protectionist measures fails to provide an effective solution to the root problem, which lies in the United States itself. In addition, it threatens to destroy the emergent growth toward regional economic integration that could alleviate pressure on the United States as a market for exports while at the same time increasing the ability of the nations such as China and Korea to buy and assimilate more exports from the United States as their economies develop. In terms of comprehensive security, such actions threaten to destroy the very base of stability and prosperity painstakingly built in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong in the postwar era and now incipiently spreading to the Chinese mainland.

The United States is not alone, of course, in bearing responsibility for the specter of protectionism and its increasing threat to comprehensive security in Northeast Asia. Some of the deficiencies of Japan in dealing with the still developing economies of Korea and China were pointed out in the previous chapter, and Korea and China as well must fully recognize the stakes that they share in maintaining a free and open trading system. As the world's second-ranking industrial power, however, Japan in particular must fully recognize its responsibility, opening its markets and assuming a much greater share of the burden of absorbing exports from developing nations, a role played

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almost exclusively by the United States in the post-war era.

The United States on the other hand, must continue to serve as the beacon, resisting the temptation of protectionism despite the inequitable behavior of some of its allies. What may be required is progression to an even higher plane of external political maturity than that it achieved at the close of World War II with the Marshall Plan. While attempting to move Japan and Europe to reach the slightly lower level of external political maturity represented by US actions in instituting the plan at the end of the war, the United States must refrain from impatient, precipitous actions that not only belie its position as the most politically mature nation but that threaten to be self-destructive in the long run.

If the United States, Japan, and Korea do not achieve these new levels of maturity, and the region instead engages in an escalatory trade war with the erection of widespread protectionist barriers, the foundation of comprehensive security painstakingly built up through the postwar era in Northeast Asia, as well as globally, will likely be destroyed. From the Soviet and North Korean viewpoint, the significant relative advantage that the United States currently enjoys in the economic component of the correlation of forces would not only be rapidly reversed, but China in particular, and also Japan and South Korea, would probably turn more toward the Soviets and North Koreans in their economic relations.

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### POLITICAL PROGRESS

Turning to the political pillar of US policy, the stakes are similarly high. Optimistic trends regarding the move toward pluralism and a growing regional and international outlook should be tempered by the twin dangers of authoritarian retrenchment and inward looking nationalism. Rampant economic protectionism, of course, would not only eliminate and possibly reverse US regional economic advantages vis-a-vis the Soviets and North Koreans, but would also reverse progress in the political realm. Even aside from this extreme scenario, however, US policy must avoid other dangerous obstacles, whirlpools, and eddies as it strives to promote progress in the region.

One such danger is the temptation to view the movement toward pluralism in Northeast Asia as a movement toward "democracy" as defined by Western political systems. As previously pointed out, the Japanese political system, even though its form is modeled after Western parliamentary democracy, in substance functions quite differently, making Western attempts to understand the Japanese in terms of its own structures and processes quite impossible. This difficulty is magnified with South Korea, and more so with China, as even the form of their systems deviates more from established Western institutions. As stated by one observer of the Asian political scene,

Such definitions [of democracy defined in Western terms] ... seem to have little in common with the successful societies of East Asia. These appear to be developing their own forms of political structures

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with governments to a lesser or greater degree responsive to the wishes of the majority.<sup>10</sup>

Reciprocal misunderstanding from the Asian nations, as, for example, those perpetuated by Japanese, Korean, and Chinese students returning from Western countries with incomplete and ill-formed ideas on what democracy means in Western terms, further complicates the problem. Western observers of the recent Chinese student demonstrations reported the presence of this phenomenon, with many students espousing classical Western or American democratic principles and ideals with little or no understanding of what they mean in actual practice.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, on the one hand, policymakers must take care not to confuse political developments within the triangle with aspirations toward Western style democracy, while on the other, they must recognize and promote beneficial trends and movements whether or not the ultimate goal is to establish a classical democratic society. Much of the confusion stems from the imprecise application of labels such as *communism*, *socialism*, or *democracy*. Just as the pure ideal of democracy has never been achieved by man, so has the pure ideal of communism or socialism yet to be achieved. The differences between China and the Soviet Union, both professing to be communist states, are currently quite pronounced. Furthermore, Deng Xiaoping's "socialism with Chinese characteristics," if planned reforms are ever fully implemented, could end up much closer to what we call capitalism than it is to socialism or communism. Yet many policymakers throughout the US

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government, as well as many regulations and policies governing US relations with other nations, lump both China and the Soviet Union in the category of communist countries and adopt policies appropriate to this classification.

Serious policymakers must look beneath the surface of such labels to discern the underlying reality of the trends in Northeast Asian societies, which in their own way and at their own pace are assimilating Western democratic ideas and adapting them to their own historical, cultural, and social circumstances. As the process continues, classical Marxist-Leninist doctrines are "slowly dying on the East Asian vine,"<sup>12</sup> and to assist positive trends, the United States must avoid viewing the future in terms of the stereotypes of the past.

In the political dimension of comprehensive security as with the economic, the United States can best play the catalyst role by creating and preserving the underlying conditions for political maturity and pluralistic development without attempting to overtly meddle in the internal politics or external relations of any nation. The United States should prepare itself for the long haul and for possible fits and starts along the way, as with the recent slowing of economic and political reforms in China. The rewards, however, such as South Korea's recent steps toward greater democracy, will eventually come.

An excellent example of a policy in this mold, one that has subtle internal implications for several Northeast Asian nations as well as significant external implications, was the modification of US policy toward North Korea. The new policy

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allowed previously prohibited "substantive" conversations between US and North Korean officials and stated US willingness to improve relations with North Korea if Pyongyang resumed its dialogue with Seoul and participated in the 1988 Olympics.<sup>13</sup> China's leaders advocated for some time that the United States adopt such policies toward North Korea, and during a period when China's reformers advocating increased contacts with the outside world and the United States are under attack from conservatives, the US action bolstered the reformers' position, demonstrating the political benefits of contacts with the outside. Furthermore, it was an indication to Pyongyang of China's growing influence with the United States, and by demonstrating the benefits of such ties, it could provide an impetus within the North Korean leadership to reduce their growing reliance on the Soviets and follow the Chinese model of gradual opening to the outside world.

For South Korea, the modified US policy toward North Korea assisted in the accomplishment of two goals: ensuring the success of the Olympics and their accompanying symbolism regarding South Korea's joining of the international community, and enhancing stability on the peninsula at the time when South Korea was attempting the transition to a more democratic and representative government. For the United States and all the nations of the triangle, this policy enhanced the chances for significant progress toward a permanent solution to the Korean problem, possibly along the lines of the "German solution" advocated by Henry Kissinger and



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others.<sup>11</sup> Breaking the current deadlock in this manner would remove the most unpredictable and explosive threat to regional peace and security. Indeed, thoughtful, farsighted, long-range policies such as these, which recognize the vastly different historical and cultural outlook of Northeast Asian peoples, are essential for pursuing the political component of a comprehensive security strategy in Northeast Asia.

#### MILITARY PRESENCE

Though the economic and political components should receive the primary emphasis of such a comprehensive strategy, the military aspect cannot be neglected. But what is the appropriate US military role in the *de facto* Northeast Asian coalition, where the threat and overall situation are viewed differently by each country, truly fitting Prime Minister Nakasone's analogy to a Japanese painting where the details must be filled in by the viewer's perception and imagination? Filling in the details is not an easy task for US policymakers who are often driven by the body politic's desire to have a clear, simple, and immediately apparent explanation for all actions.

In many respects, it is much easier to define what US military strategy in Northeast Asia should not or cannot be. It clearly neither can or should be simply a symmetrical response to the Soviet Far East military buildup. The United States, for example, cannot possibly hope to match Soviet deployments of land-based theater nuclear missiles as it did in Europe with the deployment of

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Pershing IIs and ground-launched cruise missiles. No Asian nation or group of nations has asked for such a balancing of military deployments. Any attempt to force an issue such as this would surely be to the detriment of the remarkable progress and considerable advantage the United States currently enjoys in the economic and political aspects of comprehensive security. Because of its declining economic position and growing resource constraints, the United States cannot possibly hope to match the large Soviet and North Korean ground forces deployed in the theater anyway, or even match the numbers of Soviet aircraft and ships currently deployed to the Far East.

Given the futility of trying to quantitatively match Soviet Far East military power, what then should be the US goal? Once again, because political stability and economic progress are the chief areas of US supremacy in comprehensive security and correlation of forces, military power and deployments in the region should be designed to support maintenance of the underlying conditions without jeopardizing the informal consensus that holds the de facto Northeast Asia coalition together. What is needed in general, then, are forces that provide minimum visibility in terms of tying US presence to influencing internal events in a country, yet ensure maximum flexibility in responding should they be needed. In other words, the ideal forces are those that are "over the horizon," more or less out of sight, but yet are always there and can always be counted on to move forward in an emergency.

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Air and naval forces are, of course, ideally suited to this purpose, as well as for general geographic conditions and the nature of threats and US commitments to the region. In Japan, US tactical aircraft deployments in Okinawa and Northern Honshu, coupled with the presence of the US Seventh Fleet with a carrier battle group homeported on Honshu, provide this capability. The US air and naval presence complements the Japan Self-Defense Forces' emphasis on air and sea defense, as originally promoted by Prime Minister Nakasone and his top defense officials—the goal being to employ air and sea forces as well as long-range weapons employed by ground forces, to stop any attempted invasion of Japanese territory at or before it reaches Japanese shores. Even in South Korea, where a US Army division is deployed, the primary assistance the United States would provide in the event of a North Korean attack would come from tactical airpower currently stationed on the peninsula, supplemented by further deployments after the war began.

China clearly wants the over-the-horizon presence of US air and naval forces to balance Soviet naval capabilities while it deals with the ground forces deployed on its northern border. The symbolic manifestation of this desire was the port call of three US warships to the Chinese port of Qingdao in November 1986, the first such visit since the Chinese communist victory in 1949. Finally, for all three countries of the triangle, it is the over-the-horizon presence of nuclear weapons—capable submarines, surface ships, and aircraft that counters Soviet theater nuclear

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deployments without creating internal political problems in nations of the triangle.

Attempting to radically alter the structure of US forces in the region by deploying larger ground forces, significantly increasing the numbers of permanently based aircraft and ships in the theater, or seeking deployment of land-based nuclear systems would most certainly be counterproductive to enhancing comprehensive security in the region and could result in an improvement in the correlation of forces from the Soviet viewpoint. The United States should, however, continue with qualitative improvements in its regional forces, such as the Air Force's recent replacement of older aircraft with state-of-the-art tactical aircraft and the Navy's upgrade or replacement of older ships. The United States should undertake additional deployments when sought by one of the nations of the triangle and formally or tacitly agreed to by the other nations. The recent deployment of a US Air Force F-16 wing to the strategic Misawa Air Base on northern Honshu is a case in point. Japan requested the aircraft to counter the Soviet buildup of MiG-23 aircraft in the Northern Territories, and at a time of rapid growth in the Soviet Far East military threat in general, China and South Korea perceived advantages to their own security as well.

The danger policymakers must carefully consider when pursuing additional deployments, however, is that an increase in military capability may be counter-balanced by decreasing US political and economic advantages, should new force deployments result in internal political divisions in

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the receiving nation or in new fears of excessive militarism in the other nations of the triangle. The result could very well be an overall decline in comprehensive security. Marginal increases in military capability could thus have much larger negative potential in the overall correlation of forces.

#### SHARED BURDENS

Given that the Soviet Far East military buildup will continue into the coming century, how can the United States continue to provide the military deterrent necessary for comprehensive security in the face of both the political limitations discussed above *and* increasing domestic budget and resource constraints outlined earlier? The simple answer is that it can't, bringing into focus the fourth pillar of a comprehensive security strategy for Northeast Asia: the need for other nations, in light of the new international economic realities, to assume an increasing share of the security burden. Notwithstanding the ambiguity and uncertainty of the current Northeast Asian security picture, the United States must embark on the difficult course of forging a stronger coalition among the nations of the Northeast Asia triangle, with increased sharing of mutual defense burdens a primary element of the coalition.

Japan is the key to such an ambitious goal. Not only is the US-Japan alliance the cornerstone, as defined by top US defense officials, of US security policy in the region, but Japan, more than any other country, also holds the key to the economic and political future of the region. The

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argument rages on all sides as to whether Japan is doing enough for its own defense. Some, such as Stanford professor Edward A. Olsen, argue that the United States has borne an inequitable share of Japan's defense burden for far too long, providing "the costly military and political buffer that subsidizes Japan's prosperity,"—implying that such a relationship has brought about a concomitant decrease in US prosperity.<sup>15</sup> The Reagan administration, on the other hand, holds that the growing Soviet threat and the importance of US bases and facilities in Japan to the defense of *both* countries necessitates that economic and defense issues between the two countries not be linked.<sup>16</sup> Still others, including Henry Kissinger, believe that a markedly increased Japanese defense effort is "largely unnecessary to maintaining global equilibrium" and fear a potential resurgence of Japanese militarism that could elicit "destabilizing compensations" from other Asian nations, chiefly China and South Korea.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of *comprehensive* security, as originally defined by the Japanese and borrowed here, economic and defense issues cannot be totally separated, and Japan, with its ever growing economic might, cannot avoid the responsibility for doing more for its own defense, for regional security, and ultimately for global security of the free world. Some observers believe that Japan has not lived up to the commitments implied by its comprehensive security concept, even in the economic realm where its greatest strength lies.<sup>18</sup> One of them, Professor Olsen, states,

Using all three sectors of its comprehensive security doctrine, the Japanese could readily increase their

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security contribution in the form of armed forces, military-related technology, military aid, and trade/economic aid which bolsters the stability of threatened areas (notably in the Third World).<sup>19</sup>

As far as regional acceptability with the other two nations of the triangle is concerned, the key factor in any Japanese effort to increase its comprehensive security efforts, play a greater regional security role, and serve as catalyst for closer regional security cooperation, is the political maturity with which it proceeds. If Japan were to begin by attaining the plane of external political maturity achieved by the United States with its postwar Marshall Plan, and, as many have suggested, institute a modern-day version for Asia, eliminating many of the strings that it has attached to past aid efforts, it could make major strides toward dispelling the prewar image of the Japanese as a self-centered, uncompassionate race, lacking in spiritual values and seeking only dominance over others. As we have seen, such an image lingers in Asia to this day, particularly in Korea and China. But beginning with economic aid efforts on a scale equivalent to the Marshall Plan, and accompanied with continued expanding of political relations with China and Korea on a basis of mutual equality, Japan could go a long way toward dispelling these lingering images. The \$30 billion overseas development aid program proposed by Prime Minister Nakasone, if fully carried through, will certainly be a step in the right direction. To match US largess with the Marshall Plan (\$13.3 billion over 42 months) in today's prices, however, would require on the order of \$60 billion over an equivalent period.<sup>20</sup>

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What is beyond doubt is that Japan must undertake economic and political actions that clearly demonstrate to its neighbors that Japan views their prosperity, security, and growth as essential to its own; a commitment in this regard, continuing into the coming century, would alleviate concerns over increased Japanese defense budgets and expanded regional security roles. Given the inertia inherent in the fragmented power centers of the Japanese socio-political system, continued US diplomatic and economic pressure to move along these lines will be necessary to alter the Japanese outlook.

With respect to Korea, the United States should continue to encourage the South along the road to military self-sufficiency, with the eventual goal of substantially reducing its forces on the peninsula. The timing of such withdrawals should be judicious, however, and based on an overall calculation of the desires of all nations of the triangle. Depending on the state of North-South relations and the progress of Soviet-North Korean relations, it might, for example, be possible to remove US ground troops if South Korea achieves projected military equivalence with the North in the mid-1990s. Some have proposed interim steps in this regard to lessen tensions on the peninsula. Former US Ambassador to South Korea William H. Gleysteen, Jr., for example, proposed reduction in both the scale and duration of the annual US-South Korean Team Spirit exercise (an action that may be forced by budget restrictions anyway) in response to Pyongyang's announced stand-down from major field exercises in 1986.<sup>21</sup>



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Many Chinese analysts believe that such action would also increase China's leverage over the North and allow the United States and China to work in concert toward their common goal of ensuring peace and stability on the peninsula.<sup>22</sup> Such positive trends aside, US air forces, at a minimum, would probably have to remain to some degree well into the next century for both peninsular and overall regional security purposes. And even if Japan were to follow the scenario outlined above and move rapidly into a position where it could play a regional security role of some sort, accepted by both Korea and China, continued US military presence on the Korean Peninsula would probably be desired by both as a hedge against lingering uncertainties about the Japanese.

Of all its relationships with nations of the Northeast Asia triangle, that with China is destined to remain the most problematic for the United States until the clear direction of China's modernization drive and the extent to which it will open itself to the outside world become apparent. If China is in time fully integrated into the regional and global economies, and if it makes significant progress toward achieving its modernization goals and along with them, a higher level of self-confidence and political maturity, then its historic desire to be an independent power is less to be feared. Greater integration with the other nations of the triangle and with the West also raises its stake in contributing to the security of the overall economic and political system. In the interim, then, the current US policy of supplying China with modest levels of equipment and training that enhance its defensive capabilities is in

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keeping with increasing the country's sense of security and confidence, thereby assisting those in the leadership who desire a continuation of reforms and closer relations with the outside.

Finally, a stronger Northeast Asia security coalition requires strategic consensus and eventual coordination of strategic planning and policies. In the current environment, attempting to establish a formal process to accomplish this in the short term would be premature and almost certainly counterproductive in light of Liddell Hart's warnings about forcing an alliance. But though the *de facto* security coalition is effective in the existing situation and with the current high level of unilateral US commitment, the situation could change markedly if present trends continue into the next century. For example, if the Soviet Union continues its military buildup in the Far East while strengthening its ability to compete economically and politically, and if the United States is to redress the economic problems resulting from its declining dominance of the international economy, the United States must begin the process of developing a strategic consensus on increased burden sharing and division of security responsibility.

One possible method of accomplishing this is under Professor Olsen's concept of "strategic reciprocity," wherein the United States would share power and decisionmaking authority with its key allies, avoiding the mistake it has often made with NATO in attempting to dictate policy to the alliance.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, given the historical and cultural predilection of the triangle nations toward maintaining their independence, not following this

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course will most certainly destroy the yet fragile strategic consensus that has so far developed in Northeast Asia. The United States should begin this process on a bilateral basis with each nation of the triangle, bringing to both high level consultations and detailed planning activities a greater willingness to share its planning assumptions and data on a reciprocal basis. Based on this more open and thorough discussion, a better understanding of equitable defense burden sharing arrangements would hopefully emerge.

Since the common denominator in the strategic outlook of all the triangle nations is the US commitment, such rationalization of bilateral strategic understandings, plans, and burden sharing responsibilities would greatly facilitate the next step toward a stronger coalition: *integrating bilateral arrangements into a regional context*. If the US bases each of its bilateral relationships on a realistic regional outlook, it cannot help but provide impetus for the nations of the triangle to find ways of more closely coordinating with the other nations.

One action the United States could take to facilitate the process and increase the perception of its own regional security orientation would be to combine its two joint-service military commands in Northeast Asia that are subordinate to the overall US Pacific Command into one Northeast Asian subordinate unified command, still under the Pacific Command. The functions of the current subordinate unified commands, US Forces Korea and US Forces Japan, would have to continue to exist in some form to facilitate combined national

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command arrangements with Korean forces and coordination arrangements with Japanese forces. But placing these two structures under an overall Northeast Asian Command umbrella would send a strong signal to our friends and allies in the region.

To further emphasize this signal, responsibility for the budding US military relationship with China should be fully transferred to the new command. Such action would underscore US understanding of and commitment to the dynamic Northeast Asian region as the key to defense of the Asian-Pacific region as a whole. It would also reflect the decreasing importance of the purely North Korean threat as South Korea's economic and military power grows, and the increasing prominence of the Soviet threat (including Soviet-North Korean collusion) and the possibility of regional or global conflict as the greatest military threat to the region.

The result of US commitment to policies based on these four pillars, conducted through a necessarily subtle step-by-step approach, would be a long-term process of building a stronger regional coalition on the foundation of the current base of "soft regionalism" that has emerged in Northeast Asia. Though there are many uncertainties remaining in the equation—China's future orientation, Japan's ability to achieve the level of political maturity mandated by its growing power and influence, Korea's ability to smoothly make the transition to the community of economically advanced, democratic nations, to name just a few—the new international economic and political realities necessitate action.

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Growing talk of the "excess protection that the United States provides for so many unresponsive allies,"<sup>24</sup> or the "security surplus" as opposed to allied "security deficits" that the United States produces partly through its budget deficit and in spite of its large and growing trade deficits with many of the same allies, will not fade in the future. Unless the Soviet Union collapses or radically changes its international outlook, both highly unlikely events given the consistency of Soviet behavior in the postwar era, coalition building will be a continuing requirement into the coming century. And given the transfer of US-Soviet competition to the Asian-Pacific region, Northeast Asia will be a principal, if not the primary, region where a strong anti-Soviet coalition is essential. Since it will be a long-term process, *the time to begin is now.*

This study began with a more or less global perspective, describing the shift in the US "center of gravity" from Europe toward the Pacific. From the Asian-Pacific region as a whole, the perspective was then funneled further down to the Northeast Asian subregion, where the majority of the material presented has focused. It is time now to traverse back through the funnel and once again take the global perspective. Zbigniew Brzezinski has defined the US-Soviet competition as

a classical historical conflict between two major powers. But it is more than merely a national conflict. It is also a struggle between two imperial systems. And it involves—for the first time in history—a two-nation contest for nothing less than global predominance.<sup>25</sup>

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To be sure, the two empires in this struggle are governed by vastly different organizing principles: authoritarian control, domination, intimidation in the Soviet case, contrasted with a loose community of common economic and political interests in the US case. But the imperial nature of the struggle is undeniable.

At the focus of this struggle, the Eurasian landmass, the Soviets are attempting to expand outward from a territorially contiguous base, while the United States is attempting to prevent such expansion through its alliance systems and more indirect relations with various countries. The key to victory is what Brzezinski calls "prevailing historically," that is, not allowing the Soviet Union to achieve its historical goal of dominating the Eurasian landmass. Since the Soviets are a one-dimensional power, and for them not prevailing militarily over the Eurasian landmass means losing, they are capable of achieving their objective only through military means. The United States and its "empire" of allies and friends must have the military power and political will to contain the Soviets militarily until their own superior economic, political, and social systems can flourish, spread, and eventually overwhelm the Soviet empire, forcing significant changes in the nature of the Soviet system itself.<sup>20</sup>

With the advent of the Gorbachev reforms, the portrait of the Soviet Union painted by Brzezinski has become more complex. The new emphasis on domestic restructuring and international political and economic maneuvering is clearly designed to force the country out of its

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one-dimensional strait jacket so that it can compete with the United States as a multi-dimensional power. The verdict on the success or failure of this movement—and whether it makes the Soviets a more or less dangerous adversary—is unlikely to become apparent for years or perhaps even decades. What is clear, in the words of a study by the US Commission on Integrated Long Term Strategy, is that the United States “cannot base [its] long-term strategy on uncertain forecasts.... Change is possible, but would have to show itself in concrete actions that reduce the dangers to our interests.”<sup>27</sup>

In the US–Soviet competition, a Soviet breakthrough on any of the three central strategic fronts could lead to a failure of the United States to prevail historically, and herein lies the linkage between Northeast Asia, as the key to the Far East front, and the other global fronts. As we have seen, Northeast Asia, as evidenced by Gorbachev’s speech in Vladivostok, has become a primary focus and perhaps a major testing ground for Soviet efforts to break out of its classification as a one-dimensional power. In global terms, therefore, Northeast Asia is destined to play a significant role in determining the outcome of the imperial struggle. The US ability to apply the principles of a comprehensive security strategy in Northeast Asia, designed to forge an effective coalition for attacking the overall strategy of the Soviet Union, both regionally and globally, is of utmost importance if the United States is indeed to prevail.

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## NOTES

### One—THE CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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## THE AUTHOR

COLONEL R. MARK BEAN, US AIR FORCE, has served throughout East Asia and in the Pentagon as a pilot and politico-military affairs staff officer. His assignments having taken him to Taiwan, the Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Korea, Lieutenant Colonel Bean has developed a keen interest in Pacific and East Asian affairs. He holds a B.S. degree from the US Air Force Academy and an M.A. from the University of California at Los Angeles. Colonel Bean was assigned as the US Air Attache to the People's Republic of China in the summer of 1990.



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